

Evidence for the Presence of “Gassed” Jews in the Occupied Eastern Territories, Part 1

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1. The Importance of the Search for the “Gassed” Jews

According to mainstream historiography, during a period from December 1941 to the fall of 1944, millions of European Jews were murdered in homicidal gas chambers in six camps in Poland – the “combined concentration and extermination camps” of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek (Lublin) and the “pure extermination camps” of Chełmno (Kulmhof), Bełżec, Sobibór and Treblinka. Revisionist historians, however, dispute this claim, considering it a theory completely lacking of documentary as well as material proof. In a number of studies, they have shown, based on documentary as well as archeological-forensic and technical evidence, that the alleged homicidal gas chambers in these camps never existed, that the alleged numbers of victims did not perish at these sites, and that there never existed a National-Socialist plan for a systematic physical extermination of the European Jews to begin with. The revisionists further propose that the Jews sent to the “extermination camps” and allegedly gassed there were in fact deloused and then sent away, the vast majority of them to the occupied eastern territories^[1], so that said camps actually functioned as transit camps. This transit camp hypothesis is in perfect harmony with documented National Socialist Jewish policy as expressed in official and internal reports, documents on the Jewish transports, and even in classified communications between leading SS members.^[2] The exterminationists on the other hand are forced to explain away terms such as *Durchgangslager* (transit camp), *Ostwanderung* (“wandering to the east”), *Umsiedlung* (resettlement) and *Aussiedlung* (emigration) as verbal camouflage.

While the refutation presented by the revisionists alone is enough to make the orthodox “Holocaust” story collapse like a house of cards, the proponents and defenders of the officially sanctioned exterminationist hypothesis, while doing their best to counter the revisionist onslaught with censorship and various damage control tactics, keep repeating over and over the same question: If the Jews were not gassed, where did they go?

One might argue that the revisionists have no obligation to answer this question. From a moral standpoint this argument is fully valid. As in a court of law, the exterminationists must prove that the crime they allege really took place – the burden of proof is on the accuser. Moreover, since the revisionists have proven that the crime – i.e. the mass gassings – did not take place, they have no moral obligation to search for the missing, alleged victim of the fictional crime. On the other hand, from a scientific viewpoint the question posed by the exterminationists is also fully valid, even if it usually uttered as a merely rhetorical question and part of anti-revisionist propaganda.

Needless to say, the forced deportation of millions of people would leave a significant paper trail. Even if one assumes – and there is good reason for it – that the archives in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere which are not under lock and key have been purged of such “inconvenient” documents, common sense dictates that there should exist at least a number of minor direct or indirect documentary traces surviving in more or less obscure and unlikely places where the unnamed custodians of official history have neglected to look. In addition, there should exist scores of witness testimonies mentioning the presence of allegedly gassed Jews in the occupied eastern territories, and

possibly even physical traces of them. Searching for the “gassed” Jews constitutes part of a new, constructive aspect to the revisionist critique, as the orthodox historiography is not only shown to be flawed, but an alternative reconstruction of events in accordance with known facts is offered (however spotty at this early point in time) – a development of revisionism which Carlo Mattogno has termed “affirmationism”.

The present article consists of a comprehensive survey of the hitherto discovered evidence for the presence of “gassed” Jews in the east, and should be regarded as a stepping stone to further future research. Some of the evidence has already been presented in Jürgen Graf and Carlo Mattogno’s study on the Treblinka camp[3], as well as in a recent study on the Sobibór camp[4] which I co-authored together with Graf and Mattogno. It should be mentioned here that many pieces of evidence were located by the Spanish revisionist Enrique Aynat and the late Belgian revisionist Jean-Marie Boisdefeu. The majority of the finds presented below, however, are published here for the first time.

2. The Deportation of Jews from Western-, Central-, Northern and Southern Europe According to Mainstream Historiography

In order to fully understand the significance of the evidence surveyed in the present article, it is necessary to acquaint oneself with the documented historical background, namely the deportations of Jews from the German-controlled European territories. How many Jews were deported from the different countries, and when? The sections below will clarify this context.

2.1. The Deportation of Jews from *Altreich*, Ostmark and the Protectorate

It is a fact fully recognized by mainstream historians that, between early November 1941 and late November 1942, more than 80 transports brought a relatively large number from *Altreich* (“The Old Empire”, a term referring to Germany within its 1938 borders), *Ostmark* (Austria) and the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia directly into the occupied eastern territories. The destinations were, in order of frequency, Riga, Minsk, *Maly Trostinec* (Belarus), Kaunas (in German Kovno), *Baranoviči* (Belarus) and *Raasiku* (Estonia).[5] None of the documented transports were sent to the Ukraine or to the occupied parts of Russia proper. Preserved railway documents in combination with a German report from July 1942, enables us to draw the conclusion that, all in all, 66,210 Jewish deportees were sent directly into the occupied eastern territories.[6]

A somewhat greater number were sent to the ghettos in the General Government and from there later on to the “extermination camps”. A total of 65,892 Jews were deported to Auschwitz from Germany, Austria and Theresienstadt during 1942-1943; 35,561 of these were “gassed without registration”, i.e. transited east. A total of 10,933 Jews who had been sent from the *Altreich*, *Ostmark* and the Protectorate to the Łódź Ghetto were deported to Chełmno in the first half of 1942 (cf. Section 3.3.1.) and “gassed” there, i.e. transferred east. According to Jules Schelvis, 23,500 German and Austrian Jews were sent to the “pure extermination camp” Sobibór.[7] In Treblinka, 18,004 Jews from Theresienstadt were “gassed”.[8] Yitzhak Arad further speaks of “tens of thousands” of German and Austrian Jews being sent to Treblinka as well as Bełżec.[9] This means that some 100,000 Jews from the abovementioned territories were deported to the east via transit camps.

2.2. The Jews of Central Europe

2.2.1. The Jews of Poland

The vast majority of the Jews allegedly gassed in the “extermination camps” were Polish Jews. Thus one would expect a search for the “gassed” Jews to focus mainly on this group. There are, however, good reasons for not doing so. First there is the great similarity between Polish, Baltic, Byelorussian, Russian and Ukrainian Jewry. All of these groups had until the early 20th century been subjects of the Russian Czar, and besides speaking closely related Slavic tongues (except for most of the Baltic Jews), nearly all of them spoke Yiddish. A Polish Jew would therefore have been able to go more or less unnoticed among for example Russian Jews. More importantly, it is a commonly recognized fact that a large number of Polish Jews either managed to escape or were evacuated east, first at the outbreak of the war in 1939, and later also in connection with the launch of Operation Barbarossa in the summer of 1941. Not all of those Jews found their way to the interior of Russia or Central Asia in; a relatively large number also remained in Belarus while smaller numbers lingered also in the Ukraine and the Baltic States. Hersh Smolar, the Jewish partisan leader operating near Minsk whose memoirs are discussed below (Section 3.3.3.), was one of the Polish Jews who had fled to Belarus in 1939 and remained there at the time of the German invasion. It is thus very difficult to use references to the presence of Polish Jews in the occupied eastern territories as a mean to verify the revisionist hypothesis. For their presence to be of significance, the mentioned Jews would have to be reported as deported from Poland to the east from December 1941 onward, following the opening of the first “extermination camp” Chełmno (*Kulmhof*) in the Warthegau District.

2.2.2. The Jews of Slovakia

The total number of Jews in Slovakia as per the census of 15 December 1940 amounted to 88,951. [10] A deportation agreement reached between Germany and Slovakia in 1941 stipulated that the Slovakian government would pay Germany 500 *Reichsmark* per deportee for “shelter, food, clothing, and retraining” (*Unterbringung, Verpflegung, Bekleidung und Umschulung*), a cost which Raul Hilberg naturally dismisses as “fictional expenses”. [11] Deportations from Slovakia began on 26 March 1942. Up until October the same year a total of 57,752 Jews were deported; 18,746 were sent to Auschwitz while 39,006 were taken to a ghetto in Nałęczów near Lublin. From this ghetto some 9,000 of them proceeded to Majdanek, while 24,378 were sent to be gassed at Sobibór. [12] Jules Schelvis on the other hand concludes that, all in all, “around 26,000” Slovakian Jews were “gassed” at Sobibór. [13] During 1942 some 7,000 Slovak Jews managed to escape to Hungary. [14] Of the Jews that remained in Slovakia some 13,000 – 14,000 were eventually arrested. In October 1944, 7,936 of them were deported to Auschwitz, while 4,370 were sent to Sachsenhausen and Theresienstadt.

2.2.3. The Jews of Hungary

The deportation of Jews from Hungary did not begin until May 1944. Since the German-controlled areas in the east were shrinking at a rapid rate during that year, it is extremely unlikely that any of the Hungarian Jews deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau ever reached the occupied eastern territories [15], with two exceptions: 1) a transport of some thousand Hungarian women which was sent to Latvia, and of which approximately 700 were later transferred by ship from Kaunas to Stutthof on 4 August 1944; [16] 2) a transport of 500 Hungarian women, possibly from the Transylvanian town of Bistritz (*Bistrița*) that arrived in the Estonian camp Vaivara in June 1944. [17] It is not impossible that the latter group consisted of a subset of the first group, as one source states the Jewesses from Bistritz arrived via Riga. [18] Two further special cases of Hungarian or nominally Hungarian Jews reaching the east already in 1941 will be discussed below in Section 3.3.3.

2.3. The Jews of the Netherlands, Belgium and France

2.3.1. The Jews of the Netherlands

According to a registration carried out by the German occupational authorities on 10 January 1941, there lived 140,000 full Jews liable to deportation on the territory of the Netherlands, whereof 80,000 in the city of Amsterdam.^[19] From July 1941 the Dutch Jews had to have their identification papers stamped with the letter “J” for “Jood” (Jew), and from 29 April 1942 they were forced to wear a yellow Star of David with the inscription “Jood” on their outer clothing.^[20] On July 17, 1942 transports of Dutch Jews bound for Auschwitz began departing from the collection camp of Westerbork. Raul Hilberg states that 105,000 Jews were deported from the Netherlands and presents the following breakdown according to the points of arrival^[21]:

Mauthausen (1941 and 1942)	1,750
Various Concentration Camps	350
Auschwitz Complex	60,000
Sobibór	34,300
Theresienstadt	4,900
Bergen-Belsen	3,750

More precisely this gives a total of 105,050 deportees. The figure of 350 deportees to “Various Concentration Camps” appears to be in error, since Hilberg elsewhere states that a total of 680 Dutch Jews were deported to Buchenwald in the period of February-June 1941.^[22] The number of Dutch deportees to Auschwitz and Sobibór are given more exactly by Jules Schelvis as 60,185 and 34,313 respectively.^[23] The number of Jews deported from the Netherlands therefore would appear to be closer to 106,000, but Schelvis, whose figures are generally more exact than those of Hilberg’s, writes that a total of 102,993 Jews were deported from the Netherlands in 102 transports, “excluding the 2,000 or so who were arrested in Belgium and France”.^[24] Hilberg gives the number of surviving deportees as 1 for Mauthausen, 19 for Sobibór, “over 1,000” for Auschwitz, and “over 4,000” for Theresienstadt and Bergen-Belsen combined;^[25] whereas the always more exact Schelvis gives the number of Auschwitz survivors as 1,052, the number of Sobibór survivors as 18 and the number of Theresienstadt and Bergen-Belsen survivors as 4,030.^[26] Thus of the 105,000 deportees, counting the Dutch Jews arrested outside of their country) all but 5,100 are alleged to have perished during the war. Hilberg adds that “about 2,000” Dutch Jews “were killed, committed suicide or died of privation inside the country, particularly in the transit camps Vught and Westerbork.”^[27] Moreover, “up to 5,000 may have fled or emigrated, and the excess of deaths over births during the occupation was also a few thousand”, whereas the number of Jews remaining in the Netherlands at the end of the deportations is given as in total 20,000 – 22,000.^[28] A Dutch Government Report issued on 16 October 1945 states the number of remaining Dutch Jews to be 23,000.^[29] Adding the above figures together we get the following summary:

Allegedly perished deportees	approx. 99,900
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Returning deportees	5,100
Deaths in the Netherlands	approx. 2,000
Mortality surplus	approx. 2,000
Migration and escapes	up to 5,000
Remaining Jews in Sept. '44	20,000-22,000
Total:	134,000 - 136,000

Acknowledging the possibility that some of the categories might have been slightly underestimated, we thus have statistical accounts covering the fates of the 140,000 Dutch Jews. We are moreover aided by the fact that the Germans kept precise records of the transports. The mainstream historians of course assert that much of said record keeping served as a “camouflage”, and that the vast majority of the Dutch deportees to Auschwitz and Sobibór were gassed there on arrival without being entered into camp registries: about 33,313 of the 34,313 Sobibór deportees^[30] and 38,231 of the 60,085 Auschwitz deportees^[31] are claimed to have met with this fate, which according to the revisionist hypothesis means that approximately 71,554 Dutch Jews were deported to the occupied eastern territories.

2.3.2. The Jews of Belgium

Hilberg writes that the Jewish population of Belgium on the eve of the German invasion “most probably” amounted to more than 65,000 people, the majority of whom did not possess Belgian citizenship but were immigrants from Eastern Europe as well as refugees from the Third Reich. At the time of the German invasion “thousands” of the Jews fled south, whereas another 8,000 were shoved by the German occupants into France. A subsequent registration of the Jews encompassed 55,670 Jews on Belgian territory and another 516 Jews in two French *départements* attached to the Brussels military administration.^[32] Starting in August 1942, a total of 25,000 Jews were deported from Belgium to Auschwitz, and of those fewer than 1,500 returned after the war. According to Hilberg, “several hundred” Belgian Jews died in their country during arrest or committed suicide.^[33] Approximately 25,000 Belgian Jews were sent to Auschwitz, and of these some 15,700 are alleged to have been gassed; a smaller number was also sent to Majdanek.

2.3.3. The Jews of France

At the end of 1939, some 280,000 Jews lived in France; in Paris alone there were more than 200,000.^[34] The first French transport bound for Auschwitz left on 27 March 1942.^[35] By March 1943, the number of Jews deported from France had reached 49,906.^[36] A total of 75,000 Jews were deported from France; whereof at least two-thirds were foreign-born people who did not possess French citizenship.^[37] Hilberg lists the destinations of the deportees as follows^[38]:

Auschwitz	69,000
Maidanek	2,000
Sobibór	2,000
Kaunas	1,000

Jules Schelvis on the other hand states that four French transports carrying a total of 3,500 Jews were sent to Sobibór.^[39] The deportation of French Jews to Lithuanian Kaunas (Kovno) – bearing the transport code “73m” – left Drancy May 15, 1944; some of the Jews in this transport continued on to the Estonian capital of Tallinn (Reval).^[40] Except for this single transport, no French Jews are reported by mainstream historians as having reached the occupied eastern territories.

2.3.4. The Importance of the Transports from the Abovementioned Countries

The Jews deported from the Netherlands, Belgium and France are of key importance to the issue at hand. Not only are good statistics on the Jewish populations available; the transports from these three countries were carefully recorded, and there further exist detailed transport lists with personal data on the deportees. The documented facts leave very little or no room for “unknown” direct transports of Jews from those countries to the east similar to the 1941-42 *Altreich* transports to the Baltic States and Belarus. The only such recorded deportation, the 15 May 1944 convoy from Drancy to Kaunas and Tallinn, is easily distinguishable due to the late date (the German withdrawal from the Baltic States began only some months later). In other words: any reliable report of Dutch, Belgian or French being present in the occupied eastern territories from the spring and summer of 1942 onward (and up until May 1944 in the case of the French Jews) is to be regarded as strong evidence for the revisionist transit camp hypothesis.

2.4. Jews of Other Nationalities

2.4.1. Italy

In Italy, the deportation of Jews did not begin until after the overthrow of Mussolini by Badoglio and the German take-over of the northern half of the country. The first transport of 1,007 Italian Jews departed for Auschwitz on 18 October 1943. In November and early December of the same year two transports carrying a total of some 1,000 Jews departed from northern Italy. The deportations continued in small numbers until early August 1944. In total, more than 7,500 Jews were deported from Italy.^[41] For the reason discussed in Section 2.2.3., it is highly unlikely that any of the Italian Jews except for the approximately 2,000 deported between October and December 1943 ever reached the occupied eastern territories.

2.4.2. Greece

In 1941 Greece was divided into three parts: one (the north, including most of Thrace) which was incorporated into Bulgaria, one (the largest, including Athens) under Italian jurisdiction and finally one (including Salonika and the East-Aegian area) under German jurisdiction. While the latter two parts were jointly administered by a puppet government in Athens, the Italians and the Germans were split in their treatment of the Jews. In the German jurisdiction the Jews were collected in the Salonika Ghetto during 1942. In February 1943, the first transports left the ghetto for Auschwitz. A total of 45,989 Jews are reported to have been deported from Salonika up until the cease of transports in August 1943.^[42] According to Hilberg, 45,000 of them were sent to Auschwitz, whereas the rest – “privileged and foreign Jews” – were shipped to Bergen-Belsen. Yitzhak Arad, resting his argument on a railroad document as well as two eye-witnesses, suggests that at least one of the transports from Salonika in March 1943, carrying 2,800 Jews, was sent to Treblinka.^[43]

In early 1943 there lived 13,000 Jews in the Italian jurisdiction. Following the downfall of Mussolini on 8 September 1943, this part of Greece was taken by German forces together with the former Italian-occupied territories of Albania, Montenegro and the Dodecanese islands. All in all approximately 16,000 Jews lived in these areas. Up until July 1944 more than 14,000 of these Jews had been deported, primarily to Auschwitz. In all of the mentioned areas some 12,000 remained at the end of the occupation.[\[44\]](#)

2.4.3. Bulgaria

Approximately 50,000 Jews lived in Bulgaria proper before the war (a census in 1934 gave their number as 48,565). Since Bulgaria was a weak ally of Germany rather than a mere puppet state, it was able to procrastinate on a promised deportation of its Jews, and in the end, the Jews in Bulgaria proper were never deported.[\[45\]](#) However, in the northern parts of Greece (Thrace) annexed by Bulgaria in 1941 together with Macedonia, there lived some 14,000 Jews, according to an agreement signed by the SS and representatives of the Bulgarian government on 2 February 1943. Of these some 5,500 Jews lived in the former Greek areas, and in March that same year 4,215 of them were sent by ship from Vienna and from there by train to Treblinka.[\[46\]](#) A further transport with 2,382 Jews was sent from Skopje (Macedonia) to Sobibór in March 1943.[\[47\]](#) All in all 11,343 of the Jews in the annexed territories (7,122 from Macedonia and 4,221 from Thrace) had been deported by 5 April 1943 according to a German document.[\[48\]](#)

2.4.4. Croatia

Similar to Greece, the administrative territory of Croatia was split into a German and an Italian zone, with ensuing negotiation troubles concerning the deportation of the Jews. During the war Slovenia was slit up between Italy, Germany, Hungary and Croatia, while Bosnia and Herzegovina in its entirety was ceded to Croatia. In the whole of the new Croatia there lived some 35,000 Jews.[\[49\]](#) 19,800 are reported to have died in Croatian camps, primarily Jasenovac, during the following years.[\[50\]](#) During the summer of 1942, 4,972 Jews were sent to Auschwitz via Maribor. A further 2,000 Croatian Jews were deported to Auschwitz in May 1943.[\[51\]](#) Yet other Croatian Jews escaped to neighboring countries and were eventually deported from there, which makes the orthodox victim estimate somewhat floating. It is generally estimated that some 8,000 Croatian Jews[\[52\]](#) were “gassed” at Auschwitz.

2.4.5. Serbia

According to Raul Hilberg, barely 16,000 Jews lived in Serbia at the outbreak of the war.[\[53\]](#) Due to the significant involvement of Jews in the very active Serbian partisan movement, a large number of Serbian Jews were killed as hostages. On 8 September 1941 the German plenipotentiary in Belgrade, Felix Benzler, sent a telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in which he requested the deportation of the male Serbian Jews (in all some 8,000) to an island in the Danube Delta (in Romania).[\[54\]](#) On 11 September Martin Luther replied that the Jews in question should instead be interned in labor camps.[\[55\]](#) Already on the following day Benzler sent a new request for the deportation of the male Serbian Jews, arguing that for security reasons such internment was unfeasible, and that if the Jews could not be sent to Romania as per his request, they would be expelled to the General Government or to Russia.[\[56\]](#) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs now turned to Adolf Eichmann, who declared a deportation of the male Jews to the General Government or Russia “impossible” and advised that the Jews in question be shot.[\[57\]](#) Nevertheless Ribbentrop on 2 October contacted Himmler to ascertain if

the male Jews could be deported somewhere. [58] In the end, however, the decision was made to shoot the male Jews of Serbia. Thus it is a fact that a large number of Serbian Jews were shot, not primarily because of their ethnicity, but because of reasons of military security, and this as a last resort. As for the remaining Serbian Jews – the women, children, and elderly – it is alleged by mainstream historians, chiefly on basis of the so-called Turner document, that these were murdered in “gas vans” near Belgrade (in fact near the Sava River) in March-May 1942. [59] However, in his summary of the negotiations on the Serbian Jews from 25 October 1941, Franz Rademacher, chief of the “*Judenreferat*” at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noted that these Jews “would be evacuated by ship to the collection camps in the east” (*auf dem Wasserwege in die Auffanglager im Osten abgeschoben*). [60] This would suggest that the remaining Serbian Jews were in fact deported east, possibly via the Sava River and the Danube to Romania. [61]

2.4.6. Norway

1,800 Jews lived in Norway as of 1939. [62] 767 of them were deported starting on 19 November 1942. Of these deportees, 532 were sent to Auschwitz, were 346 were “gassed without registration”.

2.4.7. Denmark

When the German occupation of Denmark began in April 1940, there lived approximately 6,500 in the country. In early autumn 1943, 447 Danish Jews were deported to Theresienstadt, but none of them were ever sent on to Auschwitz. In a massive underground operation in October 1943, 5,919 Danish Jews were taken in boats to neutral Sweden. Thus not a single Danish Jew reached the “extermination camps”. [63]

2.4.8. Romania

During the war years Romania under the Antonescu regime pursued a more or less independent Jewish policy of its own, which mainly consisted in deporting Romanian Jews to Transnistria, an annexed region east of the Dniestr River. [64] Since the Romanian deportations are only indirectly related to National Socialist Jewish Policy, and since much is unclear about the deportations to – and from – Transnistria, Romanian Jewry will fall outside the scope of the present article. For an excursus related to Transnistria, see below Section 3.1.2.

2.4.9. Luxembourg

In 1935 there lived 3,144 Jews in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. During the first years of the war most of them fled the country, and by July 1941 there were only some 800 left. On 16 October 1941 a train with 334 Luxembourg Jews departed for the Łódź Ghetto. A few dozen of these Jews were later sent on to Auschwitz or the Lublin District. During 1942 the remaining Jews in Luxembourg were deported to the Theresienstadt Ghetto. [65]

2.5. The Number of Jews Deported to the Occupied Eastern Territories

According to the revisionist hypothesis, the Jews sent to the occupied eastern territories can be divided into two main groups: 1) the Jews from the transports sent directly to the Baltic States and Belarus from *Altreich, Ostmark* and the Protectorate in 1941-42 (recognized by mainstream historiography); 2) the Jews who were allegedly “gassed without prior registration” in the six “extermination camps” between December 1941 and late 1943. For the first group we have rather reliable numbers (see above,

Section 2.1.). For the second group we have reliable figures of arrivals to the Reinhardt camps (Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka, here also including Majdanek/Lublin) for 1942, and the Korherr Report further provides a figure for Chełmno (where no “gassings” took place in 1943). For the year of 1943 we must to a certain extent rely on estimates presented by mainstream historians. In the case of Auschwitz-Birkenau, we have to rely on a number of sources, which are more or less exact. In order to not make this article longer than necessary, I will here refer the reader to a revisionist study wherein these calculations are presented in detail.[\[66\]](#) In the table below the number of Jews deported to the east is broken down according to routes and nationality (Polish and non-Polish Jews). One should recall here that not all of the non-Polish Jews are Western Jews (even if they form the majority).

Deported via the <i>Aktion</i> Reinhardt camps:	~1,429,000
Deported via Chelmno:	~145,300
Deported via Auschwitz:	~354,000
Deported directly w/o any stop-over in a camp	~ 66,200
Total:	~1,994,500
- of which Polish Jews:	~1,571,500
- of which non-Polish Jews:	~423,000

The total of 1,994,500 deportees must in turn be reduced for several reasons. To begin with, a certain smaller percentage of the deportees must have perished en route during the long travel, which often took place under less than humane conditions. Further a total of some thousands of deportees were picked out from the transports to work inside the transit camps, and a number of those inevitably perished there due to various causes. Secondly, it is likely that the Germans in the transit camps subjected Jewish deportees who were dying, carriers of epidemic diseases or mentally ill to “euthanasia” (possibly by lethal injections, possibly by shooting) rather than sent them along to camps and ghettos in the east, where such individuals would pose a liability to the German administration, not to say a health risk. The third reason is that the certainty of the figures presented by the mainstream historians for the year 1943 is questionable, the figures being likely to be slight overestimates. The fourth reason is that some thousands of deportees to Sobibór were transferred to various labor camps in the Lublin district[\[67\]](#); it is also likely that a smaller number of Jews sent to Treblinka were transferred to the nearby labor camp of the same name (Treblinka I) or to other labor camps in the area.[\[68\]](#) The fifth and final reason is that some transports sent to the transit camps in late 1943 did not continue on from there to the eastern territories. The last six or eight transports to Sobibór in September 1943 arrived there from Minsk in Belarus, reportedly carrying a total of 13,700 people (documentation is lacking).[\[69\]](#) These Jews were likely sent west to be employed as workers either in Sobibór itself, where a plant for the dismantling of captured Soviet ammunition had recently been installed (in the so-called “Lager Nord” part of the camp), or in Trawniki and other labor camps. Taken together, this means that the number of Jews who reached the occupied eastern territories almost certainly amounted to somewhere between 1,800,000 and 1,900,000.

Addendum: A List of the Operational Periods of the Transit Camps

- Chełmno (Kulmhof): 8 December 1941 – latter half of 1942; summer of 1944;[\[70\]](#)

- Auschwitz-Birkenau: January or February 1942[71] – 1 November 1944;[72]
- Bełżec: 17 March 1942[73] – early December 1942;[74]
- Sobibór: 3 May 1942[75] – 14 October 1943;[76]
- Treblinka: 23 July 1942[77] – 19 August 1943;[78]
- Majdanek (Lublin): September-October 1942[79] – 1943(?). [80]

3. A Survey of the Testimonial Evidence

The testimonial evidence can here be divided into two sub-categories, indirect sources in the form of news reports, statements from exile governments, underground publications etc. where the origin of the information is usually not made explicit, and direct information in the form of eyewitness statements. We will begin our survey with the former category.

3.1. Reports in Newspapers and Periodicals

3.1.1. American Jewish Yearbook

The *American Jewish Yearbook* is one of the most comprehensive contemporary sources on the development of the Jewish communities the world over. In its 1943 edition the *Yearbook* had the following to tell its readers about the developments in Poland:

“Among the more important of these transfers of population was the expulsion of all but 11,000 of the Jews of Cracow, who were deemed ‘economically useful’ and put into a ghetto; those expelled, over 50,000 in number, were sent to Warsaw, Lublin and other cities. The stay of those sent to Lublin was short, for most of them were sent farther east, those remaining being penned in a ghetto in one of the suburbs of the city. Also sent east were most of the Jews who still remained in the western Polish provinces incorporated into the Reich.” [81]

Three of the “extermination camps” were located within the Lublin district: Majdanek (in Lublin itself), Sobibór and Bełżec. With “western Polish provinces incorporated into the Reich” is meant the Warthegau district, from which Jews were transferred east via Chełmno. In the edition from the following year (1944, with the year in review being 1943) we read:

“There are reports of Jewish deportees from Holland and other Western countries having been sent to the occupied Soviet territories for military work, but their numbers and their fate are still shrouded in darkness.” [82]

3.1.2. Israelitisches Wochenblatt für die Schweiz

The *Israelitisches Wochenblatt für die Schweiz* (Israelite Weekly for Switzerland) published many reports on the progress of the “Final solution” during the war years. In its issue from 16 October 1942 the weekly reported (p. 10f.):

“For some time there has been a trend toward dissolution of the ghettos in Poland. That was the case with Lublin, then it was Warsaw’s turn. It is not known how far the plan has been carried out already. The former residents of the ghetto are going farther to the east into the occupied Russian territory; Jews from Germany were brought into the ghetto to partly take their place. [...] Of late, transports of Jews

from Belgium and other western European countries were observed in Riga, but they moved on immediately to other destinations.”

In the issue of 27 November 1942 we read:

“On a daily basis trains depart from Berlin for the east, part of them [destined] for the ghettos, part of them for drainage work in the territories of eastern Poland and Russia. Authorities in New York are reported to have learned that a Jewish settlement rayon for all the Jews of Western Europe is to be established in the former Polish-Russian border zone and if necessary used as a political means of pressure. The deportations from Germany, Austria, Holland, Belgium and France are to cease by the end of this year. The identification papers of the deported Jews are destroyed and their names stricken out; they are henceforth only designated by numbers. It is therefore hardly possible to keep up a correspondence. [...] In Paris 4,000 Romanian Jews and Jewesses have been arrested and taken out of the city. They were allowed to bring food for two days. [...] The London-based newspaper ‘France’ carries a notice that 20,000 Jews deported from France have arrived in Bessarabia in a pitiful state. The trains went straight to Kischinev [Chisinau] and Calarisi to deliver the prisoners to the local ghettos there.”

With “the former Polish-Russian border zone” is almost certainly meant the area around the border between Poland and Russia as of 1920-1939 (note that the journal apparently uses “Russia” as synonymous with the USSR). Since, as already mentioned, the eastern part of Poland, including Pinsk and most of the Pripet marshes, fell to the Byelorussian Soviet Republic in 1939, this implies that the “Jewish settlement rayon [district] for all the Jews of Western Europe” consisted of a part of Belarus (Minsk was located only some thirty kilometers from this border).

At the time, Kishinev was located very near the border of the Transnistrian Reservation (between the rivers of Dniestr and Southern Bug), to where Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina were deported en masse by the Romanian authorities. As mentioned in Section 2.4.8 above, the Transnistria issue will not be discussed here in depth. However, it ought to be mentioned that, while most of not all mainstream historians today know nothing of deportations of French Jews to Transnistria, an article from 1953 by the Jewish-American scholar Joseph B. Shechtman confirms that there are indications of transports of Jews from France as well as other countries in Western Europe to that area:

“There are indications that in 1943 Transnistria began to serve as a kind of a ‘reservation’ for deportation not only of Rumanian Jews, but of Jews from other Nazi-dominated countries. On February 28, 1943, the London press reported that thousands of Jews who had been transported from their homes in Germany, Austria, Slovakia and the Czech Protectorate to the ‘model concentration camp’ at the fortress of Theresin [i.e. Theresienstadt] in the Protectorate, were being sent to Transnistria. [83] Eight months later, reports from Bucharest stated that freight trains crowded with Jews deported from France, Holland and Belgium ‘continue to reach the city of Jassy en route to Transnistria,’ where they ‘are isolated in camps together with Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina.’ [84] Jews from Germany and Bulgaria, as well as 700 Polish Jews, were reported among the deportees in Mogilev. [85]

A confidential report of the International Red Cross, dated January 20, 1944, states that, according to official Rumanian statistics, there were on September 1, 1943, 82,098 Jews in Transnistria. Of this number, 50,741 were deported Rumanian Jews, while the remainder were Russian Jews, native inhabitants of this area. [...] There are reliable indications that considerable numbers of Jews from Transnistria were sent to work on fortifications along the German-held eastern front. The Krakauer

Zeitung of August 13, 1942 hinted at this when it stated that the Jews deported to Transnistria 'were housed in large ghettos until an opportunity arose for their removal further east.'" [86]

The claim of transports from Theresienstadt to Transnistria requires some elucidation. During 1943 a total of 17,068 Jews were deported from Theresienstadt in 10 transports. Four of them took place in January and consisted of in all some 6,000 passengers. In February a single transport departed carrying 1,001 passengers. During the period March-August no transports took place; only in September were transports resumed again. [87] The first three of the January transports were sent to Auschwitz, as was the single February transport. From the information provided by Danuta Czech in her *Kalendarium* [88] we can reconstruct the fate of these four transports as per the table below:

Transports from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz January-February 1943

Date	Code:	Deportees	Registered	"Gassed"
Jan. 20	Cq	2000	418	1582
Jan. 23	Cr	2029	227	1802
Jan. 26	Cs	993	284	709
Feb. 1	Cu	1001	218	783
Total:		6023	1147	4876

It should be added that in the previous autumn, on 26 October 1942, a convoy (with the code "By") had brought 1,866 Jews from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz; 247 of those were registered in the camp, while the remaining 1,619 were "gassed", i.e. transferred elsewhere. The preceding five transports from Theresienstadt (departing during the brief period of 5-22 October) had all been sent to Treblinka. The transport "Ct" departing from Theresienstadt on 29 January with 1,001 deportees is listed as bound for Auschwitz by, among other sources, the *Terezin Studies* website, [89] but does not appear in Czech's *Kalendarium*. [90] Disregarding the minor uncertainty about this single transport, the contradiction between the orthodox historical picture and the 28 February 1943 news reports is clear. If the latter were correct, then the Jews in question could only have been sent to Transnistria via Auschwitz. The issue of these possible transports to Transnistria requires further research.

3.1.3. Judisk Krönika

In a study on the Swedish response to the "Holocaust", American-Jewish historian Steven Koblik has the following to say on the Swedish-Jewish periodical *Judisk Krönika* (Jewish Chronicle) issued in Stockholm:

"One center of activity [in Sweden] was with the pro-Zionist groups. They had a journal, Judisk Krönika, founded in 1932, that publicly tried to change the official congregation policy and influence the larger Swedish community. The journal developed close contacts in Eastern Europe, especially Poland, and provided some of the best information on the extent of the Final Solution found in any Western publication. The journal also became a source of information for other non-Jewish publications." [91]

During the war years, this well-informed journal carried a number of news stories that clash violently with the now established historical picture of the "Holocaust". In the issue from September 1942 we read:

“Jewish school children of more than 14 years of age are being deported from the Third Reich as well, mainly to Ukraine, where they are deployed in harvest work. The children are informed about their deportation only a few hours earlier and are allowed to take along only the mere necessities.” [\[92\]](#)

No transports of German Jews to the Ukraine are known by mainstream historiography, which inevitably leads to the conclusion, that if the above information is correct, then the children in question reached their destination via one of the “death camps”.

In its issue from the following month *Judisk Krönika* reported:

“A large number of Jews who had been interned in German concentration camps have been transported to Poland, where they are deployed to drain the swamps of Pinsk. The Dachau camp is now devoid of any Jews. Most Jews from the Rhineland, including those of Cologne, have been transferred to the ghetto of Riga.” [\[93\]](#)

While the city of Pinsk did indeed belong to Poland between 1920 and 1939, it fell to the Byelorussian Soviet Republic after the division of Poland. As we will see, the Pripet marshes and the towns and cities near it, such as Pinsk and Bobruisk, will crop up again and again in our material.

In the same issue (October 1942) we read:

“The transport of this tremendous large amount of people [from Western Europe] to Poland was accompanied by the mass expulsion of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto and from other locations. These people were deported farther east, and since they were more or less unfit for labor due to starvation and diseases, one can imagine what fate awaited them there.” [\[94\]](#)

According to the Holocaust historians, the Jews deported from the Warsaw Ghetto were killed en masse in Treblinka, not “deported farther east”. Since the Polish-Jewish underground press had reported since August 1942 that Treblinka was a “death camp” where all arriving Jews were steamed or poisoned with a delayed-action gas, this news notice can only mean that the “news” of the “truth” about Treblinka had not yet reached the well-informed Swedish-Jewish journal (which seems unlikely) or that its writers did not believe the wild atrocity stories and had more trustworthy information available to them.

Finally, in the issue of May/June 1944 we read:

“Certain sparse information begins to seep through about the fate of those Jews who have been deported from Western Europe to Eastern Europe. According to a communication from Lithuania, thousands of Jews from Holland, Belgium, and northern France have been deported to Kaunas, where many have been shot to death in the city’s fortress. In Vilnius as well a large number of Jews from Western Europe has been executed. Some 20,000 Jews from Western Europe are still in the city’s ghetto. The Germans are executing several hundred of them every day, and the Gestapo compiles lists of the next victims. Many Jews managed to escape from the various ghettos and to join partisan groups, and today there is a large number [of Jews] from Western Europe who are fighting together with the Lithuanian partisans.” [\[95\]](#)

While the *Judisk Krönika* had reported of mass killings in Majdanek and Auschwitz in November 1943 [\[96\]](#) and about the “death chambers” of Treblinka (where “many thousands of Jews have been killed”) in September 1943 [\[97\]](#) as well as in its May-June 1944 issue [\[98\]](#), the above quoted passage demonstrates that one still believed a large number of Western Jews, including Dutch, Belgian and

French Jews, to be present in the occupied eastern territories. As for the claim that the Germans executed thousands of Western Jews in Vilna in 1944, as well as similar claims elsewhere, the question of the eventual fate of the deportees to the eastern territories will be addressed in the concluding part of this article; here it will suffice to point out that if the Soviets at the end of the war had discovered remains of hundreds of thousands or even millions of deported Western and Polish Jews in mass graves on formerly German-occupied Soviet territory, they could easily have dispensed with the vapid claims about gas chambers and extermination camps and presented concrete forensic evidence at the Nuremberg trial.

Regarding the notion of mass shootings of Jews at Vilna in 1944, it is worth noting what historian Andrew Ezergailis has to say about similar claims concerning Latvia:

“Some memoir writers tell us that just before the move to send Jews back to Germany, there were large massacres in Latvia. This contention, however, must be deemed ‘folklore,’ because to date no archival information has surfaced that would confirm the murders. For example the Soviet Extraordinary Commission records no fresh 1944 grave sites.” [\[99\]](#)

3.1.4. New York Times

On 15 June 1943 the *New York Times* reported on a communiqué issued by the Belgian government in exile, according to which most of the Belgian Jews had been sent to concentration camps in Germany, Poland, and in the occupied Russian territories.

3.1.5. Notre Voix

In April 1944 the communist French underground newspaper *Notre Voix* told its readers:

“Thank you! A news item that will delight all Jews of France was broadcast by Radio Moscow. Which of us does not have a brother, a sister, or relatives among those deported from Paris? And who will not feel profound joy when he thinks about the fact that 8,000 Parisian Jews have been rescued from death by the glorious Red Army! One of them told Radio Moscow how he had been saved from death, and likewise 8,000 other Parisian Jews. They were all in the Ukraine when the last Soviet offensive began, and the SS bandits wanted to shoot them before they left the country. But since they knew what fate was in store for them and since they had learned that the Soviet troops were no longer far away, the deported Jews decided to escape. They were immediately welcomed by the Red Army and are presently all in the Soviet Union. The heroic Red Army has thus once again earned a claim on the gratitude of the Jewish community of France.” [\[100\]](#)

While it may be argued that both the French communists and Radio Moscow could be suspected of spreading propaganda, it is difficult to see how the presence of French Jews in the Ukraine could have lent itself to propaganda, especially since the Soviet Union were at the same time disseminating propaganda about German “extermination camps”.

3.2. Other Indirect Sources

3.2.1. E.M. Kulischer

In 1943, the demographics professor and member of the International Labour Office at Montreal, Canada, Eugene M. Kulischer published a survey entitled *The displacement of population in Europe*.

Kulischer was assisted in his survey by no less than 24 institutions, including Jewish ones, which in turn had a dense network of information channels in the various European countries. His chapter on “The Expulsion and Deportation of Jews” contains much information of interest to revisionist researchers; here I will contend myself with merely quoting the passages of interest to our subject:

“This forced transfer [of the Jews] has taken the following forms: [...] Expulsion from an area which is to be ‘purged of Jews’ and deportation to a special region (e.g. the Lublin reservation), city or town, or part of such region, city or town. Since 1940 this has been the usual practice adopted in removing Jews from various German-controlled territories and deporting them to the General Government, or, latterly, to the occupied area of the Soviet Union.” [\[101\]](#)

The mention of transports to the “occupied area of the Soviet Union” could possibly be a reference to the deportation of German, Austrian and Czech Jews directly to the Baltic States and Belarus in 1941-42, but the following passages are more specific:

“Some of the Jews from Belgium were sent to a neighbouring part of Western Europe for forced labour, but generally speaking the tendency has been to remove the Jews to the east. Many Western European Jews were reported to have been sent to the mines of Silesia. The great majority were sent to the General Government and, in ever growing numbers, to the eastern area, that is, to the territories which had been under Soviet rule since September 1939 and to the other occupied areas of the Soviet Union.” [\[102\]](#)

Here one should recall that the number of German, Austrian and Czech Jews deported directly to the east did not increase during 1942, according to preserved documentation, but was rather a small but steady stream, and that the last known such transport departed from Vienna on 28 November 1942. [\[103\]](#) It therefore does not make much sense for Kulischer to speak of “growing numbers” in 1943, unless he had knowledge of other, de facto increasing, transports of Jews to the occupied eastern territories. Further on Kulischer writes that

“...generally speaking, deportation to the east is for the Jews the equivalent of the recruitment for work in the Reich to which the rest of the population of German-controlled Europe is subject, and their removal further and further eastwards is doubtless connected with the need for supplying the army’s requirements near the front.” [\[104\]](#)

We note here the expression “further and further eastwards”. The destination of the transports “further eastwards” is made more clear in the following paragraph which concerns the deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto – which the mainstream historians claim led said Jews to their deaths in the gas chambers of Treblinka:

“Since the summer of 1942 the ghettos and labour camps in the German-occupied Eastern Territories have become the destination of deportees both from Poland and from western and central Europe; in particular, a new large-scale transfer from the Warsaw ghetto has been reported. Many of the deportees have been sent to the labour camps on the Russian front; others to work in the marshes of Pinsk, or to the ghettos of the Baltic countries, Byelorussia and Ukraine. It is hardly possible to distinguish how far the changes in the Jewish population of the General Government are due to deportation and how far they are attributable to ‘ordinary’ mortality and extermination. Moreover, the number of Jews remaining in the General Government is in any case uncertain.” [\[105\]](#)

Kulischer further speaks of “hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews deported eastward from the General Government” [\[106\]](#)

3.2.2. A. Rei and H. Laretei

August Rei and Heinrich Laretei, who had served as Estonia’s ambassadors to Moscow and Stockholm, respectively, before the Soviet occupation of that country in 1940, reported to the Swedish detective superintendent Otto Danielsson on 8 November 1944 that

“Jews had been deported from Czechoslovakia and Poland [to Estonia] under the pretence that they would work in Estonian factories, but were then shot. Estonian patriots had carried out investigations and discovered evidence.” [\[107\]](#)

While it is documented and acknowledged by the Holocaust historians that a transport from Theresienstadt carrying 1,000 Jews bound for Estonian Raasiku departed on 1 September 1942, mainstream historiography is unaware of any transports of Polish Jews to Estonia.

3.2.3. A. Jablonski

On 26 August 1943, the Swedish Communist organ Ny Dag published an article written by a Latvian Communist, A. Jablonski, entitled “The Germans in Latvia”, in which we read:

“During the winter 1941-1942 the Germans deported to Riga Jews from Austria, Czechoslovakia, France, and other occupied countries and executed them together with Jews from Riga in the pine forest at Čiube, between the stations of Rumbula and Salaspils.” [\[108\]](#)

3.3. The Witnesses

3.3.1. Herman Kruk

Herman Kruk was born in the Polish town of Plock in 1897. In 1920 he joined the Jewish Labor Bund. Following the German attack on Warsaw in 1939 he fled to Vilna, where he remained in 1941 when the Germans overtook Lithuania. In the Vilna Ghetto, Kruk became the head librarian and a prominent member of the ghetto community. From 1941 to 1944, he kept a voluminous diary which he regarded as a chronicle of the destruction of the Vilna Jews. In September 1943, Kruk was transferred from Vilna to the labor camp Lagedi in Estonia, where he was reportedly shot on 18 September 1944. His diary was preserved by a friend who after the war found his way to Israel. In 1961 the diary was published in the original Yiddish by the Jewish organization YIVO under the title *Hurbn Vilne* (The Destruction of Vilna, other editions of the same book go under the title *Togbuch fun Vilner Geto*, Diary from the Vilna Ghetto). The diary finally appeared in English translation in 2002. It contains numerous entries which are of utmost interest, as they blatantly contradict the orthodox historiography on the “extermination camps” and offer strong support to the revisionist hypothesis.

In Kruk’s diary entry from 30 January 1942 we read:

“A train with Jews passed by here today. The Jews said that they are being taken to work from Sosnowiec and the surrounding area. The train left in the direction of the Eastern Front.” [\[109\]](#)

Sosnowiec is a city in Upper Silesia, not far from Katowice, which is in turn located not far from Oświęcim, that is, Auschwitz. According to orthodox historiography, the very first transport of Jews sent

to Auschwitz to be gassed reportedly originated from Upper Silesia. The Holocaust historians are not unanimous when it comes to the date of this transport. Danuta Czech in her *Kalendarium* states that the convoy arrived from the Upper Silesian town of Beuthen on 15 February. [110] The sources she gives are not contemporary documents but statements from the SS men Rudolf Höss and Pery Broad that not in any way support the alleged date or origin of the transport. [111] Jean-Claude Pressac on the other hand dates the beginning of large-scale gassings at Auschwitz (in *Krematorium I*) to January 1942 [112], as does Ber Mark, who identifies the first alleged victims as coming from an unspecified location in Upper Silesia. [113] Given the date and reported origin of the transport witnessed by Kruk it nevertheless seems plausible that we are here dealing with an observation of the first Polish Jews sent to be “gassed” at Auschwitz. Holocaust historiography knows of no transports from Sosnowiec to Auschwitz (or any other “extermination camp”) taking place earlier than May 1942, [114] but we should recall here that when it comes to many if not most deportations of Jews from Poland, contemporary documents are lacking and dates and numbers often derive from testimonies.

In a brief chronicle of the Kovno Ghetto written as a diary entry on 16 February 1942 and detailing events transpired in that ghetto from late June 1941 to February 1942, Kruk writes:

“The only disturbing thing was that masses of Jews were driven into Kovno from the Czech area, from Łódź, Upper Silesia, Belgium, and Germany. The Slobodka [Vilijampole] Judenrat [in Kovno] calculated that they would settle those Jews in the ghetto, but it turned out that the Jews were brought to Kovno for destruction.” [115]

Only two transports from the west to Kovno (Kaunas) are known by mainstream historiography for the period in question: one carrying an unknown number of German Jews from Berlin on 17 November 1941, and one with 995 Jews from Vienna departing on 23 November 1941. The mention of Jews from Łódź and Upper Silesia are of particular interest. As already mentioned, the first Jews sent to be “gassed” at Auschwitz are reported to have been Jews from Upper Silesia, and as seen above, Kruk on 30 January 1942 witnessed a convoy of Jews from that part of Poland passing through Vilna on their way to the eastern front. From January 1941 onward, Jews from Łódź are alleged to have been gassed at the Chełmno camp.

Kruk’s mention of Belgian Jews is difficult to explain, since the first deportations from that country reportedly took place in August 1942. Some 8,000 Belgian Jews were expelled to France, but deportations from there did not start until March 1942 (cf. Sections 2.3.2. and 2.3.3.). Kulischer on the other hand states that “some Jews, mainly of Polish origin, were transferred from Antwerp to Lodz for work in textile factories” during the winter of 1941-42. [116] Provided that this information is correct, then some of these Jews may hypothetically have reached Kovno via Chełmno. Perhaps more likely Kruk’s unnamed informant(s) was in error here. Another spurious piece of second-hand information (considering the date) was noted down by Kruk on 12 March 1942: the *Judenälteste* of the Kovno Ghetto had sent him “a yellow patch from a Western European Jew” together with a letter claiming that it derived from one of “a large group of Jews from Belgium and Holland” which had recently been brought to Kovno to be shot, but of which “many managed to hide.” [117]

On 12 March 1942, Kruk penned the following entry in his diary:

“A rumor has suddenly spread through the ghetto that 2,000 German Jews were brought to Subocz Street [in Vilna].” [118]

Two days later, on 14 March 1942, he returned to this subject:

“We have already noted that 2,000 German Jews are in the Municipal Houses on Subocz. Now I know that the group of Jews is from Austria, most from Vienna. So far, we have not been able to make contact with them.” [\[119\]](#)

Mainstream historians know of no such transport of Austrian Jews to Vilna. These deportees may have been sent there directly from Vienna, but it is also possible that they reached Vilna via the Łódź ghetto. From 16 October 1941 to 4 November of the same year, a total of 5,002 Jews were deported from *Ostmark* (Austria) to the Łódź Ghetto. According to a Gestapo report dating from 9 June 1942, 10,993 of the 19,848 Jews deported to Łódź from *Altreich, Ostmark* and the Protectorate had been evacuated (i.e. sent east via Chełmno) up until that date. [\[120\]](#)

When dealing with the possibility of transports to the east via the “pure extermination camp” of Chełmno, Kruk’s diary entry from 4 July 1942 under the heading “A Message from Łódź” is of utmost interest:

“Just received a message from Łódź. For us, Łódź is one of those cities from which you can obtain almost no information. Of course, the rumors from there are crazy and wild, and according to them, it is already certain that there are no Jews in Łódź\.

Now I learn from two young people who were taken out of the Łódź Ghetto in March that Łódź has a ghetto. There is no shooting, and mass executions are unknown. The only thing is, people are taken off to work. They figure that about 10,000 Jews have recently been sent out of Łódź. Now the young people know what it is to be sent out to work. They are dragged around from place to place; they don’t know where they are or what they are doing. From time to time, groups are pulled out and disappear, and they assume that they are shot...

Both of the young men escaped from such a group, and after a week of wandering, they were arrested in Vilna [and taken to] Łukiszki [a prison in Vilna] and were released from there only two days ago. Here in the ghetto they were clothed, and soon they will be sent to forest work.” [\[121\]](#)

Orthodox historiography has it that, from January 1942 onward, numerous Jews from the Łódź (*Litzmannstadt*) Ghetto were sent, not to work, but to be killed in the Chełmno “extermination camp”. According to the “Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto”, 10,003 Łódź Jews were sent to their deaths in January and 7,025 in February. [\[122\]](#) In contemporary German documents the Jews evacuated from the ghetto are referred to as “resettled” (*ausgesiedelt*), and the diary entry of Kruk clearly shows that this resettlement was real and not a camouflage for mass killings. This diary entry thus constitutes a strong confirmation of the transit camp hypothesis. It is possible that the two Łódź Jews which Kruk received the information from only had knowledge of the number of Jews deported in January, considering the striking match between the figures (“about 10,000” and 10,003). The fact that the two young men had wandered for only a week from their work place to reach Vilna indicates that at least part of the Łódź Jews were sent to Lithuania or possibly to neighboring Belarus. [\[123\]](#)

The notion expressed by Kruk in his entry from 16 February 1942 that Jews from Łódź among other places were brought to Kovno merely to be shot there seems somewhat spurious in light of what the prominent Kovno Jew Avraham Tory entered into in his diary on 14 July 1942. Here we read that “four Jews from Łódź” had been brought to the Kovno Ghetto Hospital for surgery after having “spent a long

time in a labor camp” [\[124\]](#) We will also note here briefly that a number of witnesses report the presence of Polish Jews in the Baltic States. Most of them, unfortunately, do not specify where in Poland these Jews came from or when they had arrived to the occupied eastern territories. Jeanette Wolf, a German Jewess deported to Riga, writes in her memoirs of Polish Jews being interned in the Stradsdenhof camp near Riga. [\[125\]](#) The German Jew Josef Katz repeatedly mentions the presence of Polish Jews in the Riga Ghetto and the Kaiserwald Concentration Camp (in the same city), including “Shmuel, a Jew from Łódź” [\[126\]](#) In one of the undated notations made by Kruk after his deportation to Estonia, and which seems to refer to December 1943, we read that the camp elder in a camp in Narva (possibly the Vaivara subcamp Narva-Ost) was “the Galician Jew Zieler.” [\[127\]](#) Preserved file cards from the Estonian camp Klooga shows that at least 14 of the inmates there were Jews from Warsaw. [\[128\]](#) It is further reported that a smaller group of Polish Jews worked with cremating the bodies of executed political prisoners near the Estonian Tartu camp in November 1943. [\[129\]](#)

Kruk’s entry from 16 April 1943 is of extreme interest:

“I learn that for the past two weeks, two trains have been halted in Vilna, each with 25 cars of objects, apparently from the Dutch Jews. [...] Today a rumor is circulating that there are about 19,000 Dutch Jews in Vievis.” [\[130\]](#)

Vievis (Polish spelling Jewie) is a small town located between Kovno and Vilna with direct access to the railroad running between those two cities (cf. Ill. 1). In a Lithuanian doctoral dissertation which is partially available in English translation online, historian Neringa Latvyte-Gustaitiene gives a description of the camps located in Vievis that is based almost exclusively on post-war testimonies:

“As early as 1942, there were two labour camps at Vievis, one for Soviet prisoners of war and the other for Jews. Both were supervised by a German military unit, under the command of an officer named Deling.²²³ The majority of the Jews were mostly engaged in building the highway. [...] In May 1942, there were 700 Jews in the camp. The flow of people was intense: large groups were often removed to be murdered, and others arrived to replace them. Prisoners from the Vilnius and Kaunas ghettos worked there. [...] The regime at the Vievis work camp was very severe. Leaving the camp was strictly forbidden. The campsite was fenced off with barbed wire and guarded by armed personnel. The working day started at 5:30; the roll-call was at 6:00 a.m. The food was bad. [...] In mid-1943 the Vievis labour camp came under the supervision of the Vilnius City Commissar, who was noted for his cruelty. [...] The inmates continued to build the highway. Nutrition did not improve, ‘Quite often you could see Jews returning from work, holding one another so as not to fall.’ The living quarters were unhealthy and even a threat to life. People slept on four-story berths made of boards joined together. They put some straw on the boards, if they could get any. Selections at the camp continued, and groups of Jews were brought to replace others. Those who were ill were most often transferred to the Vilnius or Kaunas ghettos. From these ghettos, the camp received some aid - clothing, boots and other things. Although the internal regime had not changed substantially, confrontations between the Jews and the camp guard became more frequent. [...] In September, a big group of Jews arrived at the Vievis camp. Selections of those fit to work began immediately. Dzena selected able-bodied Jews, and those who had gold, to remain in the camp. The greater majority, including the elderly people and children, were transported to Paneriai [i.e. the alleged mass shooting site Ponary]. [...] A 45 kilometre narrow-gauge railway line from Vievis to Paneriai had been built, which transported Jews to the site of their death. [...] The Vievis labour camp was liquidated in December 1943. All its workers were murdered in Paneriai.” [\[131\]](#)

What seems certain of the above information is that there existed a Jewish camp in Vievis from early 1942 to December 1943. That ill inmates from the Vievis camp were brought to the Vilna or Kovno ghettos – a detail which does not square well with the assertion that Jews from the same camp were shot in large numbers at Ponary – is confirmed by the Kovno Ghetto diary of Avraham Tory. In his entry from 2 July 1943 Tory writes:

“Yellin, the representative of Vievis camp, arrived here today. He comes to the Ghetto [in Kovno] once every two or three weeks to collect wooden shoes, underwear, and other supplies from our welfare department. The conditions in the Vievis labor camp are harsher than in the Ghetto. The housing conditions there endanger the health and lives of the inmates, the regime is strict, and the labor is back-breaking. The Vievis labor camp is under the supervision of the city governor of Vilna, who is a very cruel man. About four weeks ago, the camp workers feared that all the inmates would be exterminated after two Jewish youths had refused to obey the orders of the camp guards. Once in a while, patients from Vievis camp are admitted to out Ghetto hospital. The camp inmates also come here quite often to ask for help over some problem or other. We, for our part, extend them whatever assistance we can.” [\[132\]](#)

In a collection of “Holocaust survivor” testimonies from 2007 we read the following account concerning “Marie”, a Jewess from the Vilna Ghetto:

“When they saw that the last days of the [Vilna] ghetto were approaching [the ghetto was liquidated on 23 September 1943] Adam [Marie’s brother] succeeded to be transferred to the camp Zezmarai, working for the German engineering organization TODT. He was working there as a camp physician, while Marie remained in the [Vilna] ghetto. Just before the great action her brother arrived with friendly members of the TODT organization and saved her. She was right now in camp Vievis. After about a month, she was transferred to Milejgany and from there to the Zezmarai camp.” [\[133\]](#)

This account suggests that Vievis functioned not only as a labor camp but also as a transit camp from where Jewish prisoners were relayed to other camps.



Illustration 1. A map of the Vilna-Kovno area in 1941 with Vievis underlined by the author. Trains coming from the south arrived at the Landwarów (Lentvaris) junction, where they either continued to the east

and Vilna/Wilno/Vilnius, or to the northwest and Kovno (Kaunas). (Source: Section of Internationale Weltkarte 1:1 000 000 Sonderausgabe IV.1941 Ber. V.41 N-35 Wilna).

The notion that someone would have simply made up such a curious claim as that 19,000 Dutch had arrived in a small Lithuanian appears out of the question. For what reason would someone make it up, or, for that matter, how could such a misconception arise? But where then did these Jews come from?

Transport lists shows that between 2 March and 6 April 1943, six transports with altogether 7,699 Dutch Jews left Westerbork for the “extermination camp” of Sobibór. [\[134\]](#) Was the person behind the Vievis rumor perhaps misinformed about the number of Dutch deportees? This may be, but it is also possible that Vievis at this time held Dutch Jews deported to the East not only via Sobibór but also via Auschwitz. Between 17 July 1942 and 25 February 1943 a total of 42,533 Dutch Jews were sent to Auschwitz; 30,413 were “gassed upon arrival”, i.e. transited elsewhere. [\[135\]](#) If part of these were sent to Vievis, it is possible that there indeed were 19,000 Dutch Jews present in this town on 16 April 1943.

Later on the same day that he reported on the rumor of Dutch Jews in Vievis (16 April 1943) Kruk wrote under the heading “Once more about the Dutch Jews”:

“Just now I succeeded in getting a Jewish sign from a Dutch Jew and a copy of the order of the Reichskommissar for the Occupied Netherlands about Jewish property (attached).” [\[136\]](#)

The editor of the diary informs us that “The order is missing.” This entry shows us that Kruk had good reason to believe the Vievis rumor, since he himself had in his possession items belonging to one or more Dutch Jews transported to the East. With “Jewish sign” is undoubtedly meant the yellow cloth Star of David forcibly worn by the Western Jews. In the Netherlands these emblems bore the inscription *Jood* (Dutch for Jew).

On 19 April 1943 Kruk wrote:

“Europe will be purged of Jews. The Jews of Warsaw are being taken to be killed in Malkinia, near Lwów or near Zamość. The Jews from Western Europe are being taken east, their wandering go on.” [\[137\]](#)

In his previous entries Kruk repeatedly recounts claims that the Warsaw Jews were killed near the Polish town of Malkinia. On 5 September 1942 Kruk wrote that “The Jews are taken toward Malkinia, and there, there... they are poisoned with gas”. [\[138\]](#) On 30 September 1942 he noted that the mass killings “are supposed to have taken place somewhere near Malkinia. People are forced to leave their clothes in the trains. From there, they are driven to underground trenches, and they don’t come back. How it is done is still a secret.” [\[139\]](#) By 27 October the rumors had become more specific: “The Jews from there [Warsaw] were taken, as has been mentioned, to Belz (near Lwów) and to a forest around Malkinia. There the Jews are put into special underground entrances, poisoned, and burned.” [\[140\]](#) On 30 October Kruk again wrote of the rumors, this time giving a source, issue no. 6 of the Polish underground newspaper *Niepodległość*. Kruk summarizes: “Some were taken on trains to Treblinka near Malkinia, many were conveyed as far as Belz (in the Lwów district), where they were poisoned *en masse* with gas or killed with electrical current in the former soap factory there.” [\[141\]](#) By 6 May 1943, finally, the rumors had grown wild indeed:

“Treblinka. This is the name of that place near Malkinia where Jews from Warsaw, Białystok, and Grodno are killed. Here, as I said, the trains come and everyone has to undress to go into the woods, where there

is supposedly a disinfection facility. Anyone who realizes what is going on, and doesn't want to undress, is handed over to a group of Jewish police, who throw the resisters into a fire; then you have to undress and be driven in, no matter where. [...] The victims are driven into the disinfection facility. From the inside, the air is sucked out by a machine until the people die. The bodies then burst from the pressure of the air and are automatically thrown into a so-called crematorium, which burns the bodies to coal. The narrators [unnamed] say that ashes are scattered on the fields of the whole area. Clearly, the ashes from the burned people." [\[142\]](#)

It is of interest to note that, while Kruk readily reported rumors spread by Polish underground publications that the Jews from Warsaw, Białystok and Grodno were killed en masse at Treblinka and Bełżec (which is here confused with another place, the town of Bełz) – the latter camp being located not far from Lwów and Zamość – he never mentions the alleged mass killing of the Łódź Jews at Chełmno (Sobibór and Auschwitz are also unknown to him). The reason for this is obvious: ever since his encounter with the two young Łódź Jews on 4 July 1942, he understood that the rumors according to which “there are no Jews in Łódź” were “crazy and wild” because he knew from first-hand sources that “mass executions are unknown” and that the tens of thousands of Jews evacuated from the Łódź were merely “taken off to work”. This shows that Kruk, while susceptible to black propaganda about the fate of the Warsaw Jews – something understandable in the light of the fact that most of his relatives lived there – did not lend credence to mere rumor in cases when he had access to reliable first-hand sources contradicting those rumors.

Kruk's note from 19 April 1943 that “The Jews from Western Europe are being taken east, their wandering go on” shows that he did not believe said Jews were being gassed en masse in the “extermination camps” in Poland. The reason for this is also simple: why would he believe so when he knew that the Dutch Jews were being taken to the occupied eastern territories?

On 26 April 1943 Kruk wrote more about the Western Jews under the heading “Where are the millions of Jews of Europe?”, insinuating that at least part of them had been shot in Lithuania and Belarus:

“We know, for example, that Poland alone contained more than 3 million Jews, and now – can you find even half a million in former Poland? However much we try, we cannot reach such a number. And the hundreds of thousands of Jews from Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and the thousands of Jews from France, Belgium, Holland, and Czechoslovakia, who have gone through Lithuania in the thousands, who were shot near Minsk, at the Seventh Fort of Kovno, etc.?” [\[143\]](#)

On 30 April 1943 Kruk returned to the subject of the deported Dutch Jews:

“We have already written about the packing up of 130,000 Jews from Holland and their transport to the East. [\[144\]](#) We have also mentioned that carloads filled with goods from the Dutch Jews are in the Vilna railroad station. Now an issue that clears it all up - beautiful old furniture has been brought here, to our joiners' workshop, to be repaired. In the drawers people find Dutch documents, including documents from December 1942, which means that ostensibly, the Dutch were not taken to the East before January or February. Thus the Jews [there] did not know they were going to be exterminated. The rich Dutch Jews even brought bridge tables with them, in case, God forbid, such things wouldn't be found among the backward Ostjuden [Eastern European Jews]. Now it is clear that they were slaughtered, just like the Oszmiana [\[145\]](#) and Swieciany Jews. In our area, dozens of railroad cars are scattered, filled with Jewish junk, remnants of the former Dutch Jewry.” [\[146\]](#)

This passage removes the last doubt about the origin of the transports, because the mainly Yiddish-speaking Jews in the Vilna Ghetto would certainly have been able to tell Dutch from German. The dates written on the documents discovered in the drawers also confirm that the Dutch Jews had been brought to Lithuania either in January or February 1943 via Auschwitz or in March or April via Sobibór.

One might argue here that the trains may have brought only the belongings of Dutch Jews murdered at Sobibór, and not the Jews themselves in still living condition. Such a counterargument, however, clashes with the mainstream historiography on Sobibór. Miriam Novitch writes that “Gold and jewelry were sent directly to the Führer’s Chancellery in Berlin. Prisoners’ clothing, from which the yellow star badges, and all signs indicating their origin, were removed, went to several German institutions.” [147] Yitzhak Arad quotes the testimony of Jan Piwonski, a railway worker at Sobibór station:

“I saw how the goods which were of no value to the Germans were burned. The other goods were loaded on freight cars and sent to Germany. Such transports with objects and clothing departed twice a month. Valuables, gold, and money were packed in an iron box and sent to Berlin twice a week.” [148]

One would think that Piwonski would have recalled if part of the spoils for some odd reason had been sent not to Germany, but to the Baltic States! Moreover, if the railway cars really were filled with the stolen belongings of Dutch Jews murdered in Sobibór, how come there were not only possibly incriminating documents among the objects, but also Star of David patches? It should further be pointed out that this passage indicates that the transited Jews did not have all their belongings confiscated at Sobibór. Finally we note that nowhere in this or the following entries does Kruk give an explanation to how he knew that the Dutch Jews sent to Lithuania had been “slaughtered”.

A further passage of interest was penned by Kruk on 23 June 1943:

“In the Minsk Ghetto, 3,000 - 4,000 Jews now live. Next to the ghetto is another ghetto. In the first ghetto are Russian Jews from Minsk, Slutsk, Baranovitsh, etc. In the second, there are altogether 1,500 German and Czech Jews.” [149]

Kruk knew this information from two individuals who had recently been to Minsk. The assertion that 1,500 German and Czech Jews at the time lived in the second ghetto appears to contradict the statement of Minsk witness Hersh Smolar (see Section 3.3.3.) that the last remaining German Jews in the “Hamburg Ghetto” were murdered in “gas-vans” in early 1943. [150] On the other hand, Smolar reports that no less than 12,000 Jews (whereof about 3,200 in hiding) were still living in the Minsk ghetto as of late February 1943. [151]

3.3.2. Hilde Sherman-Zander

Hilde Sherman-Zander, a German Jewess born in 1923, was deported from Cologne to Riga on 10 December 1941. In her memoirs she recalls an incident taking place at a not further specified date in the summer of 1942:

“One morning on the way to work, as we crossed the railroad tracks, we found there standing a long train made up of cattle wagons. On the tracks lay small pieces of paper and cardboard, on which were written, ‘Help, we are thirsting to death’ and cries of ‘Water! Water!’

From the air apertures, which were barred with barbed wire, we saw hands and lower arms reaching out. Suddenly the unfortunates threw out rings, watches and money in the hope of receiving a mouthful of water in return. We were hastily marched on our way.

In the evening in the ghetto we learned that the clothing from this transport had already arrived in the Ghetto. Only the clothing. Also a couple of prams with baby bottles filled with milk. There was no trace of the people. They were Dutch Jews, deported from Westerboork [correct: Westerbork].

So it continued during the whole of the summer: Every second day large amounts of clothing arrived in the ghetto: bed sheets, shoes, toilet articles. Everything was unloaded in the enormous hall and then sorted. [...] Not once did a single human soul from all the thousands and yet thousands from these transports reach our ghetto. By now we knew where they went: to the Hochwald [i.e. the Bikernieki Forest]. All of them. Without exception. All were shot and buried in mass graves.” [152]

Similar to Herman Kruk, Sherman-Zander claims that the Dutch deportees were all shot to death in forests in the vicinity of Riga, but this assertion is not based on observations of her own. As mentioned above, the deportation of Dutch Jews to Auschwitz began on 17 July 1942, a fact which fits well with Sherman-Zander’s testimony.

3.3.3. Hersh Smolar [153]

Hersh Smolar was a Polish Jew born in 1905. In 1939 he fled from his native city of Bialystok to Minsk in Belarus, where after the German invasion in 1941 and the erection of the Minsk Ghetto he became a prominent figure in the local Jewish underground. From 1942 onwards, Smolar led a group of Jewish partisan fighters based in the forests and swamps near Minsk. In his memoirs, originally published in 1948, Smolar recalls the arrival of Western Jews to Minsk:

“Ever since transports of Jews from various European countries had begun arriving at the Minsk railroad station - from Germany and France, from Poland and Czechoslovakia, from Hungary and Greece - we were receiving from our people employed at the station fragmentary reports about the Jews in those countries. We heard about the various methods the Nazis were using not only to terrorize the Jews but to undermine their vigilance by deception. We knew, for example, that this was done by spreading rumors that the transports were going to work-places in the east.” [154]

Unfortunately, while the passage quoted here is found in a chapter describing events taking place during the summer of 1942, Smolar does not make it clear when these transports began arriving or until what date they continued. We recall here that the first deportation of Jews from Greece took place in February 1943, whereas in France the deportations began already in March 1942.

The mention of Hungarian Jews might be taken to indicate that the information relayed by Smolar is unreliable, due to the reasons presented above in Section 2.2.3. There is, however, an entirely possible explanation for the presence of nominally Hungarian Jews in Belarus in 1942: In August 1941, 17,000 – 22,000 of the Jews living in the former Czechoslovak province of Carpatho-Russia, which had been incorporated into Hungary, were declared as stateless and deported by the Hungarian authorities across the Dnjestr River to the Ukrainian region of Kamenetz-Podolsk. [155] Historian Christian Gerlach further mentions that the 2nd Hungarian Army brought some thousand of Hungarian “Work Jews” with them to Belarus in the summer of 1942, who were then also employed by *Organisation Todt*. [156] In his short memoirs from 1961, the Berlin Jew Karl Loewenstein, who was deported to Minsk on 14 November

1941 and transferred to Theresienstadt on 13 May 1942 (due to distinguished service in World War I), mentions having been in contact with a Hungarian Jew in Minsk.[\[157\]](#)

3.3.4. Heinz Rosenberg

The German Jew Heinz Rosenberg, born in 1921, was deported from Hamburg to Minsk on 8 November 1941 (the first direct transport to that city).[\[158\]](#) His memoirs were published in 1985. A few days after Rosenberg's arrival to Minsk, another transport with "about 1000 Jews from Düsseldorf" arrived.[\[159\]](#) This is perfect accordance with facts, since a transport bound for Minsk departed from Düsseldorf on 10 November. At the time, Rosenberg was told by SS members that "another 30 to 40 transports would follow".[\[160\]](#) This reported statement fits well with the fact that another 32 direct transports reached Minsk: 4 more in November 1941 and another 28 in the period May – November 1942 (most of them from Vienna). Rosenberg writes that in the next few weeks following the Düsseldorf transport, more trains arrived, each carrying about 1000 people, so that in all 7,500 Jews arrived in the ghetto (which seems to imply a total of 7 transports). The documents show that the transports to Minsk in November numbered 6, and that they carried a total of 5,453 people. Thus Rosenberg somewhat overestimates the number of deportees, but within a reasonable margin of error. The origins of the transports following the first two from Hamburg and Düsseldorf are given by Rosenberg as "Berlin, Vienna, Prague and Bremen/Hamburg".[\[161\]](#) The documents show (in chronological order): Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Brünn and Hamburg. Here Rosenberg is in error, but it is not as grave an error as it might appear. Brünn (present Brno) was a city in the Protectorate and it is not out of the question that Rosenberg in his recollections mistook it to have arrived from Prague. The mention of Vienna and the lacking mention of Frankfurt are perhaps more serious, and points to a somewhat faulty memory. Rosenberg is correct, however, that the last of the November transports arrived from Hamburg. It is worth noting here that Karl Loewenstein, who arrived with the fourth transport (from Berlin), recalled in 1961 that the three following transports arrived, in chronological order, from "Brünn, Bremen and Vienna".[\[162\]](#) Later in his recollection Loewenstein explicitly mentions the presence of Vienna Jews in Minsk in the winter of 1941-42 (and that part of the German ghetto had been named after these Jews)[\[163\]](#), while the documents show that the first direct transport from Vienna to Minsk departed on 6 May 1942. A hypothetical explanation for this would be that the transport from Vienna to Kaunas departing on 23 November 1941 was for some reason rerouted to Minsk, or that some Jews from the Kaunas transport were sent on to Minsk.[\[164\]](#) However, as far as the author of this article is aware, there exists no documentary evidence supporting this hypothesis.

The part of Rosenberg's memoirs that interests us here describes how the witness worked in February-March 1942 with sorting the belongings from arriving transports in the former Minsk Opera:

"A large contingent of ghetto inmates worked every day in this building with sorting the stolen goods of the 'enemies of the Reich'. We were dealing with hundreds and thousands of trunks, rucksacks and handbags from the belongings of some 23,000 Jews, who had arrived to Minsk in 23 transports, but never were admitted into the ghetto. Instead they were shot or gassed immediately at arrival. Only from the labels on the trunks could our people know where the transports had come from."[\[165\]](#)

Apparently Rosenberg "knew" about the fate of these Jewish transports only from hearsay, as he himself during this period of time neither was present at the railway station nor outside of the city near the alleged killing sites. It may be worth noting in this context K. Loewenstein's comment that the Minsk railway station and the ghetto of the German Jews were located in opposite ends of the city.[\[166\]](#)

According to the documents, not a single direct transport from the west arrived in Minsk during the whole period from December 1941 to May 1942. The possible counterargument that the luggage Rosenberg sorted might have come from Jews sent from Theresienstadt to nearby Maly Trostinec does not hold water, since the first of these transports (five in all) departed on 14 July 1942. Neither does there exist, as far as the author of this article is aware, any reports of Jewish transports arriving by train to Minsk from other parts of *Ostland* or the Ukraine during the period in question. This implies that if Rosenberg is correct, then the 23 unknown transports arrived to Minsk indirectly from the west via Chełmno or Auschwitz. Alas, Rosenberg does not tell his readers what he and his fellow workers read on the trunk labels!

When we compare Rosenberg's statement with what contemporary documents has to tell us about Minsk during the period in question (early 1942) something rather curious crops up. On 5 January 1942, the *Stadtkommissar* of Minsk, *Gauamtsleiter* Wilhelm Janetzke sent a letter to the Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories, Alfred Rosenberg, in which he related that he had just been informed by the SS and Police that central authorities had the intention

"of bringing approximately 50,000 more Jews from Germany to Minsk in the next weeks and months."

Janetzke strongly protested the planned deportations, arguing that the city, which had been severely devastated by the war but still had 100,000 civilian inhabitants, could not receive more transports, and that there were in the city's ghettos already "about 7,000 Jews from Germany" and "roughly from 15,000 to 18,000 Russian Jews". [\[167\]](#)

On 16 January, the expert on Jewish questions in Rosenberg's ministry, *Amtsgerichtsrat* Wetzel, replied in a letter addressed to *Reichskommissar* Lohse (i.e. Janetzke's superior):

"According to a communication of the Reich Security Headquarters imparted to me, it was planned to send 25,000 Jews from the Reich to Minsk, who were supposed to be accommodated in the ghetto there. Of these, 7-8,000 Jews have reached Minsk. The rest who remained behind cannot be transferred to Minsk at this time due to transportation difficulties. As soon as these difficulties are removed, however, the arrival of these Jews in Minsk must be reckoned with." [\[168\]](#)

On 6 February 1942 *Generalkommissar* Kube wrote a letter to Lohse in which he supported Janetzke's protest and pointed out the impossibility of accommodating yet an additional 25,000 Jews. [\[169\]](#)

As has already been mentioned, no Jewish transports are recorded as having departed for Minsk during the long period from 19 November 1941 to 6 May 1942, when the first known transport from Vienna departed. Did it really take this long to remove the referred-to transport difficulties? Or was the problem in fact solved not long after Wetzel's reply and the deportation of Jews to Minsk renewed, as Rosenberg's account hints at?

If we add together the recorded number of Jews deported directly from the Reich to Minsk in the period 6 May – 28 November 1942 (the date of the last recorded such transport) we reach the figure of 25,657 people. For one of the recorded transports during this period, however, the number of deported Jews is not known. The transport in question departed from Cologne on 22 July 1942 and had the code Da-219. Since virtually all of the other direct transports from the Reich to *Ostland* carried approximately 1,000 persons each, we are justified in assuming this average number also for Da-219. Thus some 26,657 Reich Jews were sent to Minsk during the abovementioned period in 28 transports. If we then add to

these the 23,000 arrivals in February-March claimed by Rosenberg, we get the figure 49,657, that is, almost exactly the number of Jewish deportees (50,000) that the SS and Police authorities in early January 1942 had told Janetzke would arrive to Minsk “in the next weeks and months”. Was the deportation schedule resumed again in February but then stretched out over the whole of 1942 in order to make it easier for the local administration to find accommodation for the arrivals?

3.3.5. Friedrich Jeckeln

In an interrogation held in Soviet custody on 14 December 1945, the former Higher Leader of the SS and Police of *Ostland*, Friedrich Jeckeln, made the following statement concerning the Latvian “death camp” of Salaspils:

“Q: What countries were the Jews in Salaspils brought from?”

A: Jews were brought from Germany, France, Belgium, Holland, Czechoslovakia, and from other occupied countries to the Salaspils camp. To give a precise count of Jews in the Salaspils camp would be difficult. [...] The first Jewish convoys arrived in Salaspils in November 1941. Then, in the first half of 1942, convoys arrived at regular intervals. I believe that in November 1941, no more than three convoys arrived in all, but during the next seven months, from December 1941 to June 1942, eight to twelve convoys arrived each month. Overall, in eight months, no less than fifty-five and no more than eighty-seven Jewish convoys arrived at the camp. Given that each convoy carried a thousand men, that makes a total of 55,000 to 87,000 Jews exterminated in the Salaspils camp.” [\[170\]](#)

It should be noted here that while Russia as late as 2004 claimed that 101,000 “Soviet citizens” had been killed at Salaspils, and whereas a Soviet encyclopedia in 1970 gave the victim number as at least 53,700, [\[171\]](#) current historiography estimate a death toll of only some thousands. [\[172\]](#) We will return to the issue of Salaspils further on in this article.

3.3.6. William W. Mishell

Mishell, born as Mishelski in 1918, was a Lithuanian Jew who during the war lived in the Kovno Ghetto. In his memoirs from 1988 he writes of one or more transports of French Jews to Kovno in the summer of 1942:

“Barely had the bodies of the Jews from Vienna a chance to cool when, one morning, a new transport of Jews was brought to Kovno for extermination. [...] Nobody was quite sure, but it seemed that this group was from France. [...] Several more transports came in short succession and then they stopped, for how long we did not know.” [\[173\]](#)

Mainstream historiography knows of only one transports of Viennese (or other Austrian) Jews to Kaunas, which took place on November 23, 1941. The ambiguity concerning the nationality of the “French” deportees as well as the late date of Mishell’s memoirs prompts us to regard this piece of witness evidence as of minor value.

3.3.7. Lebke Distel

In his book on Abba Kovner’s Lithuanian-Jewish resistance group, The Avengers, Rich Cohen recounts the story of a companion of Kovner’s named Lebke Distel who on 1 September 1943 was deported from

Vilna to Estonia^[174] and various camps near the Narva-Leningrad theatre of the eastern front, only to be reunited with Kovner and his group in 1945:

“From Wilna, Lebke had been sent from prison camp to prison camp, a death march, always one step ahead of the Red Army. In Kortla Java, he worked on the roads in the swampy country. At night he could hear shelling and rifle shots. He was then sent down the river Narva River to Suski, where he built the German railroad. The temperature dropped to twenty five degrees below zero; prisoners carried the dead to be counted and burned. The snow was to his waist in Koromej, where he was locked up with Jews from Holland and Kovno. He then marched west to a half-remembered foundry of red flames and smoke chimneys. He worked in the metal shop. One day a door opened and in walked his brother, which Lebke had last seen in Vilna. Their mother had been sent to Auschwitz or Ponar, her good hiding place given away by a Jewish policeman. Lebke’s feet were bloody in Tallinn, the snow-covered capital of Estonia, houses serene beyond the boxcar door. A boat took him to Stutthof, outside Gdansk, the blue-black port. It was summer. Lebke was shaved, put in uniform and marched to Stuttgart.”^[175]

An indirect retelling of someone’s experiences like the one above naturally has less evidential value than would an account coming directly from Distel himself. We know from the “acknowledgments” page of the book that Cohen met and interviewed Distel in Yaqim in Israel,^[176] and we may thus assume that the passage above is based on statements from Distel. As will be seen below, the sequence of events described fits with documented facts about the places mentioned.

The name “Koromej” is not to be found on any map of Eastern Europe. Distel was however referring to a real place. The location of “Koromej” can be identified with certainty thanks partially to Distel’s mention of other places, partially thanks to the testimony of a certain Miriam Reich, a Jewess from Kovno who on 26 October 1943 was deported to “Camp Kurame” in Estonia. She describes her brief stay in the camp as follows:

“Our bunks were very primitive. No running water. No toilet facilities. An outhouse and a well were all we had. We did what we could to keep ourselves clean, but most of the time it was too cold to even want to undress and bathe. Looking for lice in the seams of our clothes was the most common evening recreational activity. Needless to say, the smell in the bunks, particularly at night, was odious. We slept on tiers of boards, one above the other, bundled up in our day clothes for warmth. Blankets were scarce. There was a wood stove in the center of the bunk that would burn dimly at night. [...] We built roads in the middle of nowhere. Ostensibly, these roads were going to provide the Germans with greater access to the Russian front. Trees had to be cleared, road beds dug, and gravel spread, all manually. The supervisors were mainly local Estonians recruited by the Germans. Some were quite decent; others were worse than the Germans. Lunch consisted of some nondescript cabbage soup with a few potatoes thrown in, and upon our return to our bunks, more of the same with a slice or two of bread.”^[177]

A close look at a map of Estonia (cf. Ill. 2) will reveal the presence of a village named Kuremäe located some 20 km south-west of the city of Narva. Some 15 km to the north-north-east of Kuremäe we find Vaivara, a concentration camp from which a large number of Jews as well as Soviet POW:s were distributed to a network of labor camps in the north-eastern part of Estonia, including Klooga, Narva-Ost, Aseri, Kiviõli, Viivikonna, Lagedi, and, indeed, Kuremäe.^[178] The presence of Reich and other Kovno Jews in “Camp Kurame” fits well with the mention in Lebke Distel’s story of Kovno Jews being present at “Koromej”. Unfortunately, Reich does not mention the origin of the other inmates of the camp.



Illustration 2. The area south-west of Narva in 1944, with Kuremäe and Vaivara underlined by the author. (Source: Section of Deutsche Heereskarte Osteuropa 1:300 000, Ausgabe Nr. 2, Blatt-Nr. U60, Narwa).

The camp encyclopedia *Der Ort des Terrors* [179] has the following to tell us about Kuremäe:

“The subcamp [Außenlager] in Kuremäe, a village in the north-east of Estonia [...] was established in October 1943. The first 150 prisoners were initially housed in a former communal building. They lacked everything: food, water, latrines, shoes and clothing. [...] Some inmates were deported directly from Kaunas [Kovno] to Kuremäe, others were brought in from different camps.

The forced labor consisted in the construction of a narrow gauge railway. In November 1943 the number of inmates rose to 462. Bodmann [an SS camp physician] mentioned the high percentage of inmates ‘completely unable to work’ who were, however, to be reduced. [180] The 33 registered deaths in November were likely not due to natural causes. In December 1943 and January 1944 the number of inmates was slightly reduced, and Bodmann registered 10 and 14 deaths respectively. 437 prisoners from Soski were brought to Kuremäe in February 1944 [181], something which raised the total number to 850. [182] On 8 and 6 February prisoners on the work sites were killed by Soviet artillery fire.

The head of the camp was Alfred Engst [183], and a certain Knott was medical orderly [Sanitätsdienstgrad]. Erich Scharfetter was present in the camp from February to March 1943 as medical orderly and disinfectant. He was infamous because of numerous atrocities. [...] Scharfetter was sentenced to life imprisonment in Stade for several cases of murder. [184...]. In March 1944 Kuremäe was closed. After an evacuation march under terrible conditions the inmates were distributed to various camps. Several witnesses mention Goldfields as the next station.”

Since “Suski” is undoubtedly the same camp as Soski (in Viru County), Lebke Distel most likely arrived to Kuremäe in February 1944. Miriam Reich on the other hand stayed in Kuremäe only “halfway through the winter”, when she and other inmates, including her mother, were marched to the camp in Goldfields. [185] As for Soski, we are informed by the same encyclopedia that it was yet another subcamp of Vaivara, located in the vicinity of Lake Peipus and the Narva River. The inmates there

worked on constructing a narrow gauge railroad – another detail which confirms the veracity of Distel’s story – as well as with shale-oil production.[\[186\]](#)

Lebke Distel’s route is moreover confirmed by an eyewitness account from a certain Wein Moyshe about “The Entrapment of the FPO Group [Abba Kovner’s resistance group] at Szpitalna Street 6” which was included among the undated notes taken by Herman Kruk in Estonia.[\[187\]](#) The only main difference is that the deportation from Vilna here takes place on 2 August 1943, not 1 September.[\[188\]](#) Moyshe mentions among the deported FPO members a Jew named “Letsid” whom the editor of the Kruk diary identifies as “Letsid Distel”. According to Moyshe’s account the train reached Vaivara via Daugavpils, Riga and Tartu. From Vaivara part of the transport continued to Kohtla (no doubt identical with the “Kortla Java” mentioned in the Distel account)[\[189\]](#) and from there on to the Vaivara subcamp Ereda. “About September 1” the FPO members were sent to Narva and then to Soski, where they met 250 Jews “from the ghetto” (likely it is the Vilna Ghetto that is implied). At the “beginning of February 1944” the Jews from the Soski camp “marched 20 kilometers to Kuremae, where it was integrated into another Jewish camp.” In March the Jews in this camp “marched 60 kilometers toward Goldfilz [Goldfields]”. Some of them were later sent on to the Klooga camp.

The Distel account is important since it indicates that the Dutch Jews deported the Baltic States were not sent there to be killed en masse, as at least some of them were still alive in early 1944.

3.3.8. Paula Frankel-Zaltzman

In a witness testimony from the Latvian Jewess and Daugavpils Ghetto inmate Paula Frankel-Zaltzman, originally published in Yiddish in 1949 and now available online in English translation, we find the following sentence buried in a description of the liquidation of the Daugavpils Ghetto on 25 October 1943:

“Just then they started to take us to Pogulanka where the earth is soaked with the blood of tens of thousands of Jewish victims from Latvia, Holland and other countries.”[\[190\]](#)

The transport carrying the witness did not stop at Pogulanka but went on to Riga. Needless to say, this brief statement has little evidential value, since Frankel-Zaltzman does not state that she herself observed any Dutch Jews. Nevertheless this throw-away reference indicates that she regarded transports from the Netherlands to Latvia as something of a common fact.

Pogulanka (or Pagulanska) is the name of a forest just north-west of Daugavpils (Dvinsk, in German Dünaburg) in south-eastern Latvia, which allegedly served as the site for mass shootings of Jews.[\[191\]](#)

3.3.9. Jack Ratz

Jack Ratz was born in Riga in 1927. In May 1943 he was sent to Lenta, a labor camp some 40 km north-east of Riga, where some 500 Jews worked[\[192\]](#):

“After two months, four hundred Jews were left in Lenta, all Latvians. After a few months, a new transport arrived, but the newcomers were not Latvian. They were German, Czechoslovakian, Austrian, and Polish Jews. Some of the foreign Jews were from the Riga ghetto; the Polish Jews had come straight from Poland. Lenta now had a mixed Jewish population.”[\[193\]](#)

One should note here that the Polish Jews are explicitly stated to have “come straight from Poland”, in other words they were not Polish Jews from Belarus.

To be continued...

Notes:

- [1] Strictly speaking, the occupied eastern territories were the two *Reichskommissariat Ostland* and Ukraine. *Reichskommissariat Ostland* consisted of the four *Generalbezirk Estland* (Estonia), *Letland* (Latvia), *Litauen* (Lithuania) and *Weißruthenien* (White Ruthenia), i.e. the occupied western part of Belarus SSR. Two further *Reichskommissariat* were planned that would encompass Muscovite Russia and the Caucasian region respectively, but those administrative entities were never realized due to the retreat of the German armies. The great areas in west and south-west Russia taken by the German early in the war were not occupied in the same sense that the territories of the two *Reichskommissariat* were, and were administered by the military command and the SS generals. It seems highly likely, however, that Jews were transported to Russia proper to carry out labor near the front; cf. H. Kruk's diary entry about Polish Jews from Sosnowiec passing through Vilna in a train heading “in the direction of the eastern front” (Section 3.3.1.).
- [2] To give just one example: In a letter sent to eight high-ranking members of the SS administration, among them the head of SS-WVHA, Oswald Pohl, on 5 July 1943, Heinrich Himmler ordered “The Sobibor transit camp [*Durchgangslager*], located in the Lublin district, (...) to be converted into a concentration camp” (a transformation which eventually did not take place); Nuremberg Document NO-482.
- [3] Jürgen Graf, Carlo Mattogno, *Treblinka. Extermination Camp or Transit Camp?*, Theses & Dissertations Press, Chicago 2004.
- [4] Jürgen Graf, Thomas Kues, Carlo Mattogno, *Sobibor: Holocaust Propaganda and Reality*, TBR Books 2010.
- [5] For a list of the documented transports, see Jürgen Graf, Carlo Mattogno, *Treblinka. Extermination Camp or Transit Camp?*, op.cit., pp. 199-201.
- [6] The available railway documents shows that, between 8 November 1941 and 28 November 1942, 66 transports with a total of 56,221 Jewish deportees were sent from Altreich, Vienna and the Protectorate to the East (cf. note 5). In an enclosure to “*Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten*” no. 10 from 3 July 1942 (RGVA, 500-1-775, p. 233) it is stated that 25 transports carrying 25,103 Jews had been sent to Riga between 17 November 1941 and 6 February 1942. Only 15,114 of these deportees are found in the available railway documentation. Thus the number of directly deported Jews amounted to [56.221 + (25.103–15.114)=] 66,210.

- [7] Jules Schelvis, *Sobibór. A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, Berg, Oxford / New York 2007, p. 224.
- [8] Miroslav Kárný, *Konečné řešení. Genocida českých židů v německé protektorátní politice*, Academia, Prague 1991, pp. 115f.
- [9] Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington / Indianapolis 1987, pp. 139-140.
- [10] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 3rd edition, Yale University Press, New Haven / London 2003, vol. II, p. 769.
- [11] Ibid., pp. 776-777. It seems somewhat that odd that Germany would bother to scam this money from Slovakia, since the latter nation, as Hilberg puts it, was a “puppet state” (ibid., p. 792) and thus could have been plundered by the Germans in a much less roundabout manner.
- [12] Ibid., p. 785.
- [13] Jules Schelvis, *Sobibór. A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, op.cit., p. 215.
- [14] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, op.cit., vol. II, p. 781; on p. 785 though Hilberg gives their number as merely 6,000.
- [15] This of course also applies to the Jews from Slovakia and elsewhere deported to Auschwitz during 1944.
- [16] Jürgen Graf, Carlo Mattogno, *Concentration Camp Stutthof and its Function in National Socialist Jewish Policy*, Theses & Dissertations Press, Chicago 2003, p. 24.
- [17] In June 1944 the possibility of using Hungarian Jews as workers in the Estonian camps was under consideration. A total of 2,310 men and 240 women were scheduled for deportation, but in the end it appears that only the 500 women arrived in Estonia. They were employed at the *Arbeitseinsatzstätte Baltöl* in north-eastern Estonia. Cf. Toomas Hiio et al. (eds.), *Estonia 1940-1945: Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity*, Tallinn 2006, p. 724.
- [18] Ibid., p. 719.
- [19] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, op.cit., pp. 600-601, 610.
- [20] Ibid., p. 615.
- [21] Ibid., pp. 628-629.
- [22] Ibid., p. 614.

- [23] Jules Schelvis, *Sobibór. A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, op.cit., p. 198.
- [24] Ibid., p. 199.
- [25] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, op.cit., p. 629.
- [26] Jules Schelvis, *Sobibór. A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, op.cit., p. 199.
- [27] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, op.cit., p. 629.
- [28] Ibid., note 139.
- [29] PS-1726, IMT Vol. XXVII, p. 506.
- [30] Schelvis writes that according to his own "rough estimates", about 1,000 Dutch Jews were transferred upon their arrival at Sobibór to labor camps in the Lublin district; J. Schelvis, *Sobibór. A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, op.cit., p. 14.
- [31] Danuta Czech, *Kalendarium der Ereignisse im Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau 1939-1945*, Rowohlt, Reinbek 1989, passim.
- [32] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, op.cit., p. 636.
- [33] Ibid., p. 645.
- [34] Ibid., p. 650.
- [35] Ibid., p. 672.
- [36] Ibid., p. 695.
- [37] Ibid., p. 699.
- [38] Ibid., p. 700.
- [39] J. Schelvis, *Sobibór. A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, op.cit., p. 198, 216-218.
- [40] Serge Klarsfeld, *Le Mémorial de la Déportation des Juifs de France*, Beate and Serge Klarsfeld, Paris 1978. This book lacks page numbers. See also Alex Fایتelson, *Heroism & Bravery in Lithuania 1941-1945*, Gefen, Jerusalem 1996, pp. 373-375. A number of inscriptions preserved on the walls of Cell No. 5 in the Kovno Ninth Fort were left by those French Jews. The inscriptions transcribed by Fایتelson includes an "S. Kool, jr., Amsterdam", something which indicates that this transport may have contained a miniscule number of Dutch Jews, most likely individuals that had been arrested in France. Fایتelson also writes of Belgian Jews being in the Drancy transport, but provides no evidence for this claim.
- [41] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, op.cit., p. 716, 718, 722-723.

- [42] Ibid., pp. 738-739, 742-743, 745.
- [43] Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, op.cit., p. 146.
- [44] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, op.cit., pp. 748-750, 755.
- [45] Ibid., p. 794ff.
- [46] Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, op.cit., p. 143.
- [47] J. Schelvis, *Sobibór. A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, Berg Publishers, Oxford / New York 2007, p. 226, note 5.
- [48] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, vol. II, op.cit., p. 805.
- [49] Ibid., p. 757.
- [50] Ibid., p. 761.
- [51] Ibid., pp. 764-765.
- [52] This group is sometimes confusingly designated as “Yugoslavian”.
- [53] Ibid., p. 725.
- [54] R. M. Kempner, *Eichmann und Komplizen*, Europa Verlag, Zürich/Stuttgart/Vienna 1961, p. 289, 290.
- [55] Ibid., p. 290.
- [56] Ibid., p. 291, facsimile of the document.
- [57] Ibid., p. 292. Nuremberg document NG-3354.
- [58] Ibid.
- [59] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, vol. II, op.cit., pp. 736-737.
- [60] Ibid., p. 293.
- [61] Cf. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Danubemap.jpg>
- [62] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, vol. II, op.cit., p. 584ff.
- [63] Ibid., pp. 589-596.
- [64] Cf. *ibid*, pp. 808-853.

- [65] Ibid., pp. 632-634.
- [66] Jürgen Graf, Thomas Kues, Carlo Mattogno, *Die Akte Sobibor*, pp. 105-109, online: <http://juergen-graf.vho.org/pdf/graf-kues-mattogno-die-akte-sobibor.pdf>
- [67] As mentioned above, Jules Schelvis states that approximately 1,000 Dutch Jews were transferred from Sobibór to various labor camps. Witnesses quoted by Schelvis further speak of at least 40 French Jews transferred to Lublin and of 830-880 Belarus Jews transferred to Trawniki; J. Schelvis, *Sobibór. A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, op.cit., p. 14, 217, 219f.
- [68] Cf. the testimony of Treblinka I inmate Israel Cymlich, according to which “transports of workers were brought in frequently from the death camp”; Israel Cymlich & Oskar Strawczynski, *Escaping Hell in Treblinka*, Yad Vashem, New York/Jerusalem 2007, p. 36.
- [69] J. Schelvis, *Sobibór. A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, op.cit., p. 198, 218-220.
- [70] These are the most commonly given dates; for a list of alleged dates relating to the camp cf. Ingrid Weckert, “What Was Kulmhof/Chelmno? Questions about a controversial extermination camp”, *The Revisionist* 1(4) (2003), pp. 400-412. Any Jews deported to the camp in the summer of 1944 would almost certainly not have reached the eastern territories. It is in fact highly dubious that any Jews were deported to Chełmno during 1944, cf. Carlo Mattogno, *Il campo di Chelmno tra storia e propaganda*, Effepi, Genua 2009.
- [71] Cf. Section 3.3.1.
- [72] The last “gassing” in Auschwitz “probably” took place on 1 November 1944, according to Danuta Czech, *Kalendarium der Ereignisse im Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau 1939-1945*, op.cit., p. 921.
- [73] Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, op.cit., p. 68.
- [74] Ibid., p. 172. The Höfle document shows that 0 Jews were deported to the camp during the last two weeks of December 1942, implying that transports ceased during the first half of December or already in November.
- [75] J. Schelvis, *Sobibór. A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, op.cit., p. 36.
- [76] 14 October 1943 is the date of the well-known Sobibór uprising and mass escape, following which the camp was promptly liquidated. It should be pointed out that the last 6 or 8 transports (the number is not known due to lack of documentation) arrived to Sobibór from Ostland in September 1943 and consisted of Russian Jews who were most likely either employed within Sobibór or transferred to Trawniki and other labor camps in the Lublin district. The last transport to Sobibór transited east was almost

certainly a convoy from the Netherlands which departed on 20 July 1943 (cf. *ibid.*, p. 198).

- [77] Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, op.cit., p. 81.
- [78] *Ibid.*, p. 372.
- [79] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, vol. III, op.cit., p. 938.
- [80] Based on the Höfle document we know that a total of 24,733 Jews were transited via Camp Lublin (Majdanek) during 1942, whereof 12,761 during the latter half of December. In the latest official estimate of the Majdanek death toll (from 2005), historian Tomasz Kranz does not claim any “gassings” for the year 1943. If any Jews were transited via Majdanek in 1943, their numbers are likely to have been very small. For more on the Majdanek victim figure, cf. Jürgen Graf, “Zur Revision der Opferzahl von Majdanek”, online: <http://aaargh.codoh.com/fran/livres7/JGrevismajda.pdf>
- [81] *American Jewish Yearbook*, no. 44 (1942-1943), p. 244f.
- [82] *American Jewish Yearbook*, no. 45 (1943-1944), p. 304.
- [83] *JTA Bulletin*, March 1, 1943. (Note in original).
- [84] *Ibid.*, November 1, 1943. (Note in original).
- [85] *Ibid.*, July 23, 1943. (Note in original).
- [86] Joseph B. Shechtman, “The Transnistria Reservation”, in: Koppel S. Pinson (ed.), *Studies on the Epoch of the Jewish Catastrophe, 1933-1945* (YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science, Vol. VIII), Yiddish Scientific Institute - YIVO, New York 1953, pp. 190-191.
- [87] Cf. Elena Makarova et al., *Theresienstadt: kultur och barbari / Theresienstadt: Culture and Barbarism*, Carlssons Bokförlag, Lund / Stockholm 1995, p. 11.
http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Holocaust/0025_BialystokChildren5Oct1943.htm
- [88] Danuta Czech, *Kalendarium der Ereignisse im Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau 1939-1945*, op.cit. Entries for January and February 1943, *passim*.
- [89] http://www.terezinstudies.cz/deu/ITI/database/tr_out_to (Accessed on 1 May 2010).
- [90] The webpage <http://www.gedenkbuch.halle.de/gbdatensatz.php?num=294> states that a Martha Bratel was brought on Transport Ct to Auschwitz on 29 January 1943, giving as its source a transport list reproduced in *Theresienstädter Gedenkbuch – Die Opfer der Judentransporte aus Deutschland nach Theresienstadt 1942-1945* (Prague 2000), p. 709. The author of this article has not been able to verify this source.

- [91] Steven Koblik, *The Stones Cry Out: Sweden's Response to the Persecution of the Jews*, Holocaust Library, New York 1988, p. 56.
- [92] *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 11, no. 7, September 1942, p. 91.
- [93] *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 11, no. 8, October 1942, p. 123.
- [94] Ibid.
- [95] *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 13, no. 5, May/June 1944, p. 68.
- [96] *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 12, no. 9, November 1943, p. 150.
- [97] *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 12, no. 7, September 1943, p. 105.
- [98] *Judisk Krönika*, vol. 13, no. 5, May/June 1944, p. 67.
- [99] Andrew Ezergailis, Harold Otto, Gvido Augusts, *Nazi/Soviet Disinformation About the Holocaust in Nazi-Occupied Latvia*, Latvijas 50 Gadu Okupācijas Muzeja Fonds, Riga 2005, p. 115.
- [100] Reproduced in: *La presse antiraciste sous l'occupation hitlérienne*. Foreword by A. Raisky, Paris 1950, p. 179.
- [101] E.M. Kulischer, *The displacement of population in Europe*, International Labour Office, Montreal 1943, pp. 96-97.
- [102] Ibid., p. 107.
- [103] Cf. Jürgen Graf, Carlo Mattogno, *Treblinka. Extermination Camp or Transit Camp?*, op.cit., pp. 199-201.
- [104] E.M. Kulischer, *The displacement of population in Europe*, op.cit., p. 110.
- [105] Ibid., p. 111.
- [106] Ibid., p. 113.
- [107] Memoranda written by Otto Danielsson on 9 November 1944, attached to a letter from Thulin to SUK on 27 November 1944, Kontrollbyråns korrespondens E4:1, SUK, RA; quoted in Mats Deland, *Purgatorium. Sverige och andra världskrigets krigsförbrytare*, Atlas, Stockholm 2010, p. 323, 521 (note 1106).
- [108] Quoted in Andrew Ezergailis (ed.), Stockholm Documents. *The German Occupation of Latvia 1941-1945. What Did America Know?*, Historical Institute of Latvia, Riga 2002, p. 472.

- [109] Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania. Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps, 1939-1944*, Yale University Press, New Haven/London 2002, p. 187.
- [110] Danuta Czech, *Kalendarium der Ereignisse im Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau 1939–1945*, op.cit., pp. 174f.
- [111] Cf. Carlo Mattogno, *Auschwitz: Crematorium I and the Alleged Homicidal Gassings*, Theses & Dissertations Press, Chicago 2005, pp. 67-68.
- [112] J.-C. Pressac, *Les crématoires d’Auschwitz. La machinerie du meurtre de masse*, CNRS Editions, Paris 1993, p. 38.
- [113] Ber Mark, *The Scrolls of Auschwitz*, Am Oved Publishers, Tel Aviv 1985, p. 4.
- [114] Shmuel Spector, Geoffrey Wigoder, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Life Before and During the Holocaust*, Vol. 3, New York University Press, New York 2001, p. 1221.
- [115] Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, op.cit., p. 210.
- [116] E.M. Kulischer, *The displacement of population in Europe*, op.cit., p. 104.
- [117] Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, op.cit., p. 231.
- [118] Ibid., p. 230.
- [119] Ibid., p. 236.
- [120] Jüdisches Historisches Institut Warschau (ed.), *Faschismus-Getto-Massenmord. Dokumentation über Ausrottung und Widerstand der Juden in Polen während des zweiten Weltkrieges*, Röderberg-Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, pp. 285-286.
- [121] Ibid., p. 319.
- [122] Danuta Dąbrowska, Lucjan Dobroszycki (eds.), *Kronika Getta Łódzkiego*, Wydawnictwo Łódzkie 1965, vol. I, p. 401, 426.
- [123] Vilna is located some 150-160 km from the Polish and (former) German (East Prussian) borders but merely some 30 km from the border to Belarus. One must further keep in mind that Jewish escapees traveling by foot, who had to look out for German soldiers, would not likely have covered a very long distance daily.
- [124] Avraham Tory, *Surviving the Holocaust. The Kovno Ghetto Diary*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge / London 1990, p. 111. In his entry from 17 November 1942 (p. 154) Tory further writes that “The Jewish police [in the Kovno Ghetto] have found two young men, both originally from Poland, who have agreed to carry out the hanging”.

- [125] Jeanette Wolf, *Mit Bibel und Bebel*, Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, Bonn 1980, p. 33. Wolf writes (ibid.) that the camp had about 1,500 inmates.
- [126] Josef Katz, *One who came back: The diary of a Jewish survivor*, Dryad Press, Takoma Park (ML), 2006, p. 65, 108, 129, 156. Katz' memoirs (not an actual diary, but memoirs in strict chronological order) were written between the early summer of 1945 and the fall of 1946.
- [127] Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, op.cit., p. 664.
- [128] Toomas Hiio et al. (eds.), *Estonia 1940-1945*, op.cit., pp. 724-725.
- [129] Ibid., p. 703.
- [130] Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, op.cit., p. 518.
- [131] Neringa Latvyte-Gustaitiene, "The Genocide of the Jews in the Trakai Region of Lithuania", online:
http://www.jewishgen.org/LITVAK/HTML/OnlineJournals/genocide_of_the_jews.htm
- [132] Avraham Tory, *Surviving the Holocaust. The Kovno Ghetto Diary*, op.cit., p. 407.
- [133] Joseph Rebhun, *Why Me? Memoirs of Holocaust Survivors*, Wildside Press, Rockville (MD) 2007, p. 173.
- [134] J. Schelvis, *Sobibor. A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, op.cit., p. 204, Table 12.9. A seventh transport departed on 13 April, but is improbable that it could have reached Lithuania by 16 April.
- [135] Forty-three transports with Dutch Jews departed for Sobibór between 15 July and 12 December. After a lull in the departures, another nine convoys Dutch Jews were sent to Auschwitz between 11 January and 1 March 1943. Cf. Danuta Czech, *Kalendarium der Ereignisse im Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau*, op.cit. Schelvis on the other hand gives the total number of Dutch Auschwitz deportees July 1942 – March 1943 as 46,555; J. Schelvis, *Sobibor. A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, op.cit., p. 198.
- [136] Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, op.cit., p. 519.
- [137] Ibid.
- [138] Ibid., p. 350.
- [139] Ibid., p. 370.
- [140] Ibid., p. 386.
- [141] Ibid., p. 396.

- [142] *Ibid.*, p. 530.
- [143] *Ibid.*, p. 521.
- [144] In his entry from 12 April 1943 Kruk writes under the heading “30,000 fresh victims”: “From the German press, I learn that the Jews must leave 8 of the 11 Dutch provinces. This means about 130,000 fresh victims. No one knows if the Jew will be sent to Eastern Europe to work or to be killed. Now it’s the turn of the Dutch Jews.” *Ibid.*, p. 515. Since the figure of 130,000 is mentioned again in the entry from 30 April, one may conclude that the figure in the heading is an error.
- [145] In his entry from 10 August 1942, Kruk writes under the heading “What happened in Oszmiana?”; “About 40 km from Vilna is the small town of Oszmiana, which was annexed to Lithuania only this spring. Until recently it was quite there. Yesterday a train passed through Vilna with Jews who tossed out about 20 letters to those working in the Vilna railroad station. From the letters, it became clear that the Jews come from Oszmiana and are being taken to work in Vievis, a small town 50 km from Vilna. They write that they don’t know where they are being taken. They were sure this was the end. Some ran away. Altogether, some 400 persons were taken. Some are in... the hospital; some were not taken because they are wounded... That means there was an Aktion, that Oszmiana has already been staked out.” *Ibid.*, p. 344. In the entry from 28 October the same year Kruk reports that 410 sick and old among the remaining 2,300 Jews in the Oszmiana Ghetto were taken away and shot; *ibid.*, pp. 387-388. The following day Kruk noted down contradictory reports that 800 Jews had been shot; *ibid.*, p. 394.
- [146] *Ibid.*, p. 525.
- [147] Miriam Novitch, *Sobibor. Martyrdom and Revolt*, Holocaust Library, New York 1980, p. 29. Cf. Y. Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka. The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, op.cit., pp. 109-110.
- [148] *Ibid.*, p. 157.
- [149] Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, op.cit., p. 570.
- [150] Hersh Smolar, *The Minsk Ghetto: Soviet-Jewish Partisans Against The Nazis*, Holocaust Library, New York 1989, pp. 102-103.
- [151] *Ibid.*, p. 108.
- [152] Hilde Sherman-Zander, *Zwischen Tag und Dunkel. Mädchenjahre im Ghetto*, Ullstein, Frankfurt a. M. /Berlin 1984, pp. 60-61.
- [153] Other sources, such as Reuben Ainsztain, spells the name of this witness as Hersh Smolyar.

- [154] Hersh Smolar, *The Minsk Ghetto: Soviet-Jewish Partisans Against The Nazis*, op.cit., p. 98.
- [155] Gerald Reitlinger, *Die Endlösung. Hitlers Versuch der Ausrottung der Juden Europas 1939-1945*, Colloquium Verlag, Berlin 1992, pp. 467-468.
- [156] Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland*, Hamburger Edition, Hamburg 1999, pp. 761-762.
- [157] Karl Loewenstein, *Minsk. Im Lager der deutschen Juden*, Bundeszentrale für Heimatsdienst, Bonn 1961. pp. 23-24.
- [158] Rosenberg gives the date as 9 November, and describes the train as being boarded 5 o'clock in the morning and departing on 10 o'clock. It does not seem out of the question that the scheduled departure time was pushed forward for whatever reason and that Rosenberg is actually correct about the date; Heinz Rosenberg, *Jahre des Schreckens... und ich blieb übrig, daß ich Dir's ansage*, Steidl Verlag, Göttingen 1985, pp. 17-18.
- [159] Ibid., p. 27.
- [160] Ibid.
- [161] Ibid.
- [162] Karl Loewenstein, *Minsk. Im Lager der deutschen Juden*, op.cit., p. 17
- [163] Ibid., p. 20.
- [164] It is interesting to note in the light of this hypothesis that, according to orthodox historiography, the Jews from this Vienna transport were shot by an *Einsatzkommando* at the outskirts of Kaunas; cf. R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 366.
- [165] Heinz Rosenberg, *Jahre des Schreckens*, op.cit., pp. 37-38.
- [166] Karl Loewenstein, *Minsk. Im Lager der deutschen Juden*, op.cit., p. 16.
- [167] GARF, 7445-2-145, pp. 65f.; quoted in: Jürgen Graf, Carlo Mattogno, *Treblinka. Extermination Camp or Transit Camp?*, op.cit., p. 198. Raul Hilberg, who merely summarizes the contents (*The Destruction of the European Jews*, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 367), gives as an alternative archival source Occ E 3-37.
- [168] GARF, 7445-2-145, p. 68; quoted in: Jürgen Graf, Carlo Mattogno, *Treblinka. Extermination Camp or Transit Camp?*, op.cit., p. 198.

- [169] GARF, 7445-2-145, pp. 72f; summarized in: Jürgen Graf, Carlo Mattogno, *Treblinka. Extermination Camp or Transit Camp?*, op.cit., pp. 198-199.
- [170] Minutes from Jeckeln's interrogation on 14 December 1945 (Major Zwetajew, interrogator; Sergeant Suur, interpreter), Historical State Archives, Riga; quoted in Gerald Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1984, pp. 96-97.
- [171] Jukka Rislakki, *The case for Latvia: disinformation campaigns against a small nation*, Editions Rodopi, Amsterdam / New York 2008, p. 124.
- [172] Ibid., p. 123.
- [173] William W. Mishell, *Kaddish for Kovno. Life and Death in a Lithuanian Ghetto 1941-1945*, Chicago Review Press, Chicago 1988, pp. 127-128.
- [174] Rich Cohen, *The Avengers: A Jewish War Story*, Vintage Books, New York 2001, pp. 87-88.
- [175] Ibid., p. 196.
- [176] Ibid., p. 255.
- [177] *Memoir: The Holocaust Recalled*,
http://migs.concordia.ca/memoirs/Reich/Rei_mem.html
- [178] Toomas Hiio et al. (eds.), *Estonia 1940-1945*, op.cit., p. 722.
- [179] Wolfgang Benz, Barbara Distel, *Der Ort des Terrors: Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, Vol. 8, Verlag C.H. Beck, Munich 2008, pp. 167-168.
- [180] Monatsbericht SS-Lagerarzt, 25.11.1943, in: EAM (*Eesti Ajaloomuuseum*, Estonian History Museum), D 152/2/40. (Source in original). The reports of the Vaivara SS-Lagerarzt were discovered only in 2002 by Estonian historian Meelis Maripuu; cf. *ibid.*, p. 144, note 4.
- [181] The exact date was 3-4 February. 23 sick inmates were evacuated on horseback and 414 on foot. The transport took place under Red Army fire and as a result of the exerting march some inmates died after arriving at the Kuremäe camp. Toomas Hiio et al. (eds.), *Estonia 1940-1945*, op.cit., p. 729.
- [182] A witness named Markus Gordon on the other hand testified that the number of inmates at the Kuremäe camp prior to the transfer from Soski amounted to some 800, not 444 as recorded by Bodman. The author of this article has unfortunately not had the opportunity to directly access Gordon's account, which is referenced in Toomas Hiio et al. (eds.), *Estonia 1940-1945*, op.cit., p. 726.

- [183] Other sources state that the *Lagerführer* was a certain Eugen Einget Wurth; cf. Toomas Hiio et al. (eds.), *Estonia 1940-1945*, op.cit., p. 722.
- [184] *Urteil gegen Scharfetter*, 1.2.1980, in: *Landgericht Stade*, 9 Ks /78-23/78. (Note in original). The Estonian name of the Goldfields camp was Kohtla, not to be confused with the nearby Kohtla-Järve camp.
- [185] *Memoir: The Holocaust Recalled*, op.cit.
- [186] Wolfgang Benz, Barbara Distel, *Der Ort des Terrors*, op.cit., pp. 175-176.
- [187] Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania*, op.cit., p. 667ff.
- [188] Another source states that 1,000 Jews from Vilnius arrived at the Kohtla railway station on 4 September 1943, whereof one half were taken to the Ereda camp and the other half to Vaivara – this would support the dating found in the Distel account; Toomas Hiio et al. (eds.), *Estonia 1940-1945*, op.cit., p. 731.
- [189] Other sources gives the name of this place as “Kohtla-Järve”; cf. Lukáš Přebyl, “Die Geschichte des Theresienstädter Transports ‘Be’ nach Estland”, in *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente 2001*, Institut Theresienstädter Initiative, Prague 2001, p. 164.
- [190] http://migs.concordia.ca/memoirs/frankel_zaltzman_paula/frankel_zaltzman_paula_04.htm
- [191] *The Holocaust in Kraslava*, http://www.seligman.org.il/kraslava_holocaust.html
- [192] Jack Ratz, *Endless Miracles*, Shengold Publishers, New York 1998, p. 43.
- [193] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

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